

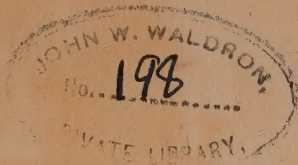
THE GREAT PORTRAITS OF THE BIBLE

LOUIS
ALBERT
BANKS



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The Great Portraits of the Bible

By Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.

Author of

"The Great Sinners of the Bible," "The Great Saints
of the Bible," "The Healing of Souls," etc.



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To

DR. ROBERT McINTYRE

A PORTRAIT PAINTER

WHOSE FAME IS IN ALL THE CHURCHES

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR

THE AUTHOR'S LAST WORD

THE Bible is a great portrait gallery. The different books are rooms through which we range and find hanging on the walls the pictures of men and women, scenes in palaces, in the desert, from the battlefields of long ago. These old portraits are interesting to us because they are full of life. These men and women have been dead for thousands of years, but their deeds are still full of vital teachings for the people who are on the earth to-day. The author has sought in the sermons contained in this volume to put the portrait before his hearers in as modern and graphic a manner as possible, while at the same time keeping always in sight the divine message meant to rebuke or warn or inspire or comfort the listener. Most of these sermons have been preached on Sunday evenings with special reference to conveying a message that might find immediate response, and nearly if not quite all of them have been blessed of God in

bringing immediate decisions for the Christian life. The book is intended as a companion volume to *The Great Sinners of the Bible* and *The Great Saints of the Bible*, and it is sent forth with the hope that it may have as generous a reception as has been given those books. With a brother's warm handshake and a "God bless you" to every one into whose hands the book may fall, the author gives it over to the public.

Very sincerely,

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

New York City.

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THE GREAT PORTRAITS OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

THE DIAL OF AHAZ

He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.—*2 Kings* xx, 11.

IN modern cities the watch and the clock are in great evidence. No other age has cared so much about marking carefully the passage of time. Some man curious in such things has found out that there are, according to the best figures, seven hundred and ninety-six thousand clocks and watches in use by the people of the city of New York alone. It is a rare thing to find a mature man or woman without a watch, and more children carry them now than did middle-aged men in their grandfathers' time. In addition to these one can scarcely walk a block in any modern city without having a great public clock with its dial open to his gaze.

But it was very different in the days connected

with the record of our text. The dial of Ahaz was no doubt the only great public dial in the city, and though Ahaz was dead it was still known as "the dial of Ahaz." Hezekiah had come to be king and had fallen ill, and prayer was made for his recovery. It was given as a sign that God heard and answered the prayer that the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz, which it is quite likely the king could see through his bedroom window, should go backward ten degrees.

Bishop Balgarnie, commenting on this incident, remarks that it is the light that makes the shadow. Where the light is brightest the shadow will be darkest and its outline most clearly defined. One has only to stand still a moment under the electric light of the street or railway station and compare the black, sharply drawn outlines which it throws upon the pavement with the fainter images cast upon it by the old gas lamps to realize the fact that the brighter the light the deeper the shadow. The same writer thinks the astounding miracle recorded in the text could only have been effected by a light brighter than the sun rising on the other side of the sun dial of Ahaz. The setting sun had thrown the shadow across ten steps, it had gone down ten degrees, when suddenly from the gate or window, from the mercy seat behind the veil of the temple,

there flashed forth the mystic light of divine glory that dwelt between the cherubim, turning back the shadow of the natural sun and converting for Hezekiah the shadow of death into morning, and he wonders if this scene did not have something to do with some of the outbursts to be found in Isaiah, in which God is referred to as a Light; such, for instance, as, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And again: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light."

When we are thinking of the divine light as superior to the light of the sun we can but recall Paul's wonderful description to King Agrippa of his conversion and of the great light that came upon him. Years afterward, describing it, he said: "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." The light which shone upon Paul, brighter than the light of the sun, would have reversed all shadows that the sun had cast.

It is not our purpose to pursue farther any speculation concerning the special miracle here recorded, but to find in the turning back of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz a striking illustration of how the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ still turns back the shadows from the hearts of men and women.

The blackest shadow which is dispelled by the presence and glory of Christ is the shadow of sin. That is a shadow which only Christ has ever been able to dispel. Henry Drummond once gave an address on "The Changed Life," in which he stated four ways in which men undertake to drive back the shadow of sin. The first is by resolution, by force of will power; but it always fails in the end. The second is by concentrating efforts against one single sin. A man has one sin that especially shames him, alarms him, and he devotes himself to getting rid of that; but while he is doing that all other sins are growing rankly in his heart. The third way is by copying virtues, one after another; but such work always lacks balance and harmony. The fourth way is called the diary method. This undertakes to live up to certain rules of conduct; but that, too, fails through forgetfulness of the rules, and so Drummond came to the conclusion, as we all must, that the shadow of sin can only be per-

manently dispelled by coming into contact and fellowship with the perfectly good and pure and bright life of Jesus Christ. When men saw how good and brave Peter and John were they explained it by saying, "They have been with Jesus." Paul was going on the way to Damascus, full of egotism and pride, full of anger and hate and murder, and suddenly he became humble and gentle and loving and easy to be entreated, and when asked to explain how all this had come about he could only tell how at midday the light brighter than the sun had shone upon him, and how Jesus, whom he had been persecuting, had turned back the shadow of his ignorance and sin and given him heavenly visions, to which he had been true.

During the life of Jesus on earth the glory of his presence fell upon no sinner so black but he was able to lift the shadow. In the Tate Gallery in London there is a series of etchings by Rosetti. These pictures reveal a rich oriental banqueting hall filled with revelers. Costly tapestries hang about the windows, elegant furnishings are everywhere, while in the center is the Magdalene. The rich profusion of her golden hair falling upon her shoulders like waves of sunshine, her head garlanded with flowers, the grace of form and beauty of countenance, constitute the main attraction.

When her laughter and song have reached their climax Christ appears in the doorway and looks upon the young woman, as one who understands but still can pity and save. The genius of the artist reveals the strange excitement which fills her heart. She rises from her couch and with eyes big with wonder looks into the face of her Saviour, who stands before her in kingly majesty and divinely pure. Like a hunted deer she looks first toward those who would destroy and then to the one who would save her. Her appeal for life is not in vain. The palace becomes a hovel. She tears the garlands from her hair and crushes them beneath her feet. She flings the rings away and discards the silken garment in her desperate flight from the wrath to come. With the dawn of another day she has exchanged the palace for a garret and her silk robes for coarse black cloth. With a broken and contrite heart she finds her way to the house of Simon, and stoops down and kisses the hem of Christ's garment, while he freely forgives, and her tears dissolve her woe. The shadow of her sin had been lifted.

Sin throws many shadows so dark that it is beyond the power of any human being to lift them from the soul, even though the sin itself were forgiven. But Jesus Christ not only has power on

earth to forgive sins, but he so illuminates the atmosphere in which the soul lives, so warms by his presence the affections and sympathies of the heart, that every shadow of sin is dispersed. A pastor tells the story of a little fellow who came early under the shadow of evil. He was a poor boy, and as the undertaker screwed down the lid of his mother's coffin he cried out with a child's breaking heart, "I want to see my mother."

"You can't! Get out of the way, boy! Somebody take the brat away."

"Only let me see her a minute, only once more," cried the orphan.

As the boy clung to him in his anguish, the man's anger rose, and he quickly and brutally struck the boy.

"When I am a man I will kill you for that," shrieked the now frantic and outraged child.

Years passed by. The boy nurtured his wrong and did not forget it. It rankled and festered in his bosom and blackened and stained his soul.

At the age of sixteen years he fell under Christian influences, and the Spirit of God spoke to him. After a long and terrible struggle, of which only those who have passed through similar trials can know anything, he found that he must forgive if

he hoped for God's forgiveness. He gave his heart to God, and "passed from death unto life."

The undertaker led a life of sin, which finally brought him into the company of associates with whom he was found in the criminal's dock.

"Does any one appear as this man's counsel?" asked the judge, as he looked around the crowded court room.

There was a moment's silence, when a young man, but lately entered at the bar, stepped forward and said, "I will undertake his case."

When the time came for him to present his plea it seemed that he was inspired, and the electrified bench and jury looked at one another; a murmur of admiration ran around the court room. "Who was he?"

The man was acquitted. "May God reward you," he said, as he stepped out of the dock. "I can't."

"I want no thanks," replied the young man, "but I would refresh your memory. Twenty years ago you struck a heartbroken boy away from his mother's coffin. I was that boy."

Turning pale, the man asked, "Have you rescued me, then, to take my life?"

"No. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' I have saved the life of a man whose

brutal deed has remained with me for twenty years. It embittered my young life and stood between me and God; but as he for Christ's sake forgave me, so do I for his sake forgive you. If you will but accept, he is as ready to forgive you; if not, go! and remember the tears of a friendless child. God bless you."

If anyone shall read this who has been so shadowed by sin and evil that he has breathed an atmosphere of hate and anger, let me encourage you from our theme to believe that our glorious Christ is able to completely dispel and turn away that baleful shadow.

Christ is able to turn back the shadow of sorrow and grief. Christ dispels human sorrow, first of all, by making us know that we are never alone or forgotten in the world. Somebody always cares for us, thinks about us, and is interested in us. A young girl who was visiting her aunt came to her friend the other day and inquired how she should abbreviate the phrase "in care of" in addressing her letters, and as she went away the young woman who had been inquired of reflected on the thought of how comforting it is to feel that we are always in the care of some kind friend. Jesus dispels the shadow of sorrow by assuring us that we may always be in the care of God, that by his direction

the angels are always watching over us and ministering to us. When we get it deep into our hearts that this is true the ministry of every day in nature becomes tender and loving. Every morning's sunrise, every evening's sunset, the changing seasons as they come and go, all speak to us of the fact that we are in the care of our heavenly Father. No sorrow can go very deep, no wound be beyond cure, if we keep that teaching of Jesus close to heart.

The nearer we are to Jesus, the brighter his presence shines about us, the more complete the victory we have over the shadow of sorrow. One night when a mother was putting her little girl to bed she noticed the child kept close to one side of her pillow. Her mother asked her why she did so. Her answer was, "I want to leave room for Jesus, because he had not where to lay his head." There are no dark shadows over the pillow when the head that wore the crown of thorns rests beside our own.

Some of you are in the black darkness, wandering aimlessly under the shadow of some great sorrow and grief. I thank God that I can point you to the door of happiness. The other day in New York city a man who has made quite a success remarked to a friend that he made the mistake of his

life when old Castle Garden was abandoned that he did not secure the old oaken doors leading into the rotunda. Continuing, he said: "I know one man who would give their weight in gold for them, just as an heirloom to hand down to his grandchildren and their successors. He is a man high up in public life and one of the great financial powers of the country. In his youth he came to this country, and entered through the old oaken doors of Castle Garden. Hundreds of those who passed through those doors to the land of their adoption, where they have since found prosperity and happiness, would give much to possess them as mementoes."

There is another door of happiness; it is the door of faith and obedience in Jesus Christ—a door that leads out of selfishness into unselfishness, where we work in fellowship with Christ to sweeten the sorrows of others. There sit about you those who have learned by happy experience the truth of all I offer you. Christ has dispelled their shadows and made their world new. For them the song of the poet has come true:

"Old sorrows that sat at the heart's sealed gate
Like sentinels grim and sad,
While out in the night damp, weary and late,
The King, with a gift divinely great,
Waited to make me glad:

“Old fears that hung like a changing cloud
 Over a sunless day;
 Old burdens that kept the spirit bowed,
 Old wrongs that rankled and clamored loud—
 They have passed like a dream away.

“In the world without and the world within
 He maketh the old things new;
 The touch of sorrow, the stain of sin,
 Have fled from the gate where the King came in,
 From the chill night's damp and dew.

“Anew in the heavens the sweet stars shine,
 On earth new blossoms spring;
 The old life lost in the Life Divine,
 ‘Thy will be mine, my will is Thine,’
 Is the new song the glad hearts sing.”

Christ can turn back the shadow of death. He can dispel all its gloom and its sorrow. Only the divine presence can take the fear out of death. David says, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Christ dispels the shadow of death by causing us to understand that death is as much a part of our inheritance as is life. This is only the school-time of preparation, and the immortal life lies beyond. Death is the angel sent to call us for our entrance upon immortality. He is not our enemy, he is not our foe, he is our servant. We do not sink

away into nothingness when we take our departure from the shores of earth. It is a voyage upon a stanch ship, with a true captain and a sure haven. My friend who watched an ocean steamer pull out from dock in New York city to make her trip across the Atlantic Ocean was greatly impressed with the sight. Nearly one thousand passengers were on board, and the breaking hearts and flowing tears of many answered to similar expressions of sadness shown by friends on the wharf. As the mighty ship slowly swung out into the stream a cheery-toned bugle sent forth the notes of a happy, hopeful air. It was an antidote for the sorrows of parting. And my friend said, "May it not be true that the angels render like service for the saints embarking from the earth?" Surely it is true that it is no rare thing about Christian bedsides for the good man or the good woman who is about to set sail for heaven and immortality to exclaim: "O, what singing! Don't you hear them—the angels?"

Let us not fail in the study of our theme to keep in sight the great truth that light and not shadow, that joy and not sorrow, that courage and not cowardice, that victory and not defeat is the proper keynote for every human life. Sorrow will come, but it is not to have the victory. Jesus was known as "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"

and yet he was the victor of the ages, and it was "for the joy that was set before him" that he endured the cross and won his triumph. And so it is "the joy of the Lord" that is our strength, and we have no right to carry about an atmosphere of sadness. If we walk in fellowship with Jesus the light of Him whose face was brighter than the sun will dispel our shadows and give us peace.

CHAPTER II

JABEZ THE HONORABLE

And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.—1 *Chron.* iv, 9, 10.

THE Bible abounds in brief biographical sketches and this story of Jabez is one of the briefest. Many writers of modern biography might well model after it. It is a rare piece of condensation. There is not another word in the whole Bible about Jabez, and yet there is here a very comprehensive portrait of the man. It is a picture well worth studying.

First of all, the story of Jabez should comfort any young boy or girl who is discouraged with the outlook on life because he or she starts so far down the ladder and seemingly with so little promise of success and triumph. You never can tell by the starting point where a man will end. History has many stories of men and women who began life

with brilliant prospects, and whose careers grew gradually darker and less promising, until the shadows of disgrace and despair settled down upon them. On the other hand, the record is filled with the accounts of boys and girls who, like Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson and our friend Jabez, started at the bottom of the ladder, in the depths of poverty and sorrow, and climbed to the top. They began in the shadows, but they completed their careers in the glory of the sunlight.

The secret of the triumphant career of Jabez is revealed very clearly in this brief biography. Jabez mounted the golden ladder that never fails to carry any soul that climbs it into the light—the ladder of prayer and personal communion with God. Jabez got his poise and confidence for struggle by daily prayer. Many people give way to worry and fret, which makes it impossible for them to do their best, because they fail to lay hold upon the strong arm of the heavenly Father.

A popular medical writer tells the story of a lady who went to consult a famous New York physician about her health. She was a woman of nervous temperament, whose troubles—and she had many—had worried and excited her to such a pitch that the strain threatened her physical strength and even her reason. She gave the doctor a list of

her symptoms, and answered his questions, only to be astonished at his brief prescription at the end: "Madam, what you need is to read your Bible more."

"But, doctor," began the bewildered patient.

"Go home and read your Bible an hour a day," the great man reiterated, with kindly authority, "then come back to me a month from to-day." And he bowed her out without a possibility of further protest.

At first the patient was inclined to be angry. Then she reflected that at least the prescription was not an expensive one. Besides, it certainly had been a long time since she had read the Bible regularly, she reflected with a pang of conscience. Worldly cares had crowded out prayer and Bible study for years, and, though she would have resented being called an irreligious woman, she had undoubtedly become a most careless Christian. She went home, and set herself conscientiously to try the physician's remedy.

In one month she went back to his office.

"Well," he said, smiling, as he looked into her face, "I see you are an obedient patient, and have taken my prescription faithfully. Do you feel as if you needed any other medicine now?"

"No, doctor, I don't," she said, honestly. "I feel

like a different person; but how did you know that was just what I needed?"

For answer the famous physician turned to his desk. There, worn and marked, lay an open Bible. "Madam," he said, with deep earnestness, "if I were to omit my daily readings of this book I should lose my greatest source of strength and skill. I never go to an operation without reading my Bible. I never attend a distressing case without finding help in its pages. Your case called not for medicine, but for sources of peace and strength outside your own mind, and I showed you my own prescription, and I knew it would cure."

That doctor has gone to his reward, but his prescription is still here. Jabez lived before the time of the Bible, but he laid hold upon the God of the Bible, and grew out of small and sorrowful beginnings into greatness. The Bible, well read, will bring God near to us and make prayer seem natural to us.

This prayer of Jabez is a very suggestive one. It goes to the very roots of life. He recognizes that the greatest danger any man can have is sin, and so he earnestly prays to be kept from evil. That prayer is the first prayer appropriate to the lips of every one of us. The evil is upon every side and seeks entrance into our hearts and lives constantly.

There is beginning to be considerable discussion in regard to the danger to the health of the people from the impure condition of the atmosphere in telephone booths. In the course of the day all sorts and conditions of people use these public booths. One person leaves the odor of some strong perfume, another of whisky, a third of bad tobacco, a fourth of some disease, and so on, until the atmosphere of the stuffy little dens is almost unbearable. It is quite probable that there is real ground for these complaints, and that disease is often contracted in the filthy atmosphere of these booths. However that may be, it is certain that in our modern life the spiritual danger from a morally impure atmosphere is constantly threatening. The very air is full of contamination. In business and social life, in books and papers, the germs of sin abound. If we are to run the gauntlet of life safely it must be because we have divine help.

A workman who was employed to remedy the variations in the great clock over the Grand Central Depot in New York gives a curious explanation of the mystery that puzzled him for a long time and gave him a great deal of work. The clock was continually wrong in its time. Sometimes it was too fast and sometimes too slow. He took it to

pieces and examined every part carefully without finding the cause. At first he thought some part of the mechanism had been magnetized, but a test proved that it was not so. Every part was perfect, and he could not understand why it did not keep accurate time. One day, after he had been again called in to set it right, though only two weeks before he had thoroughly overhauled it and pronounced it in good order, he stood on the other side of the street looking up at it and marveling at its vagaries. As he gazed he saw a pigeon alight on the minute hand and stand there preening its feathers. The spectacle gave him a clew to the mystery. He waited awhile, and saw the pigeon fly away when the minute hand of the clock was rising to a perpendicular position; but when it had passed the hour mark and was descending the pigeon again alighted upon it and kept its position for several minutes. That explained why the clock was sometimes fast and sometimes slow. The weight of the pigeon affected it according to the position of the hand. So it is that sin hampers men and women who really desire to do right. Some permitted sin or some neglect of duty destroys the balance in character and in conduct. We need to heed the exhortation, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

There is something very significant in the other wing of this prayer of Jabez. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast!" is the cry of this earnest, aspiring, and growing man. This is the language of a man who means to go on. The secret of advancement is in the on-looking eye and the lofty purpose. The men who grow are men of ideals. A man never jumps farther than he intends. His feet may not reach the spot on which he has set his eyes, but one thing is sure, they never will go beyond it. It is like that in the building up of character and in the growth of personality. No man will grow beyond his ideal. Jabez continued to grow because he continued to pray for the enlargement of his coast. If he had been satisfied to be a little two-by-four kind of a man he never would have outgrown those dimensions. But Jabez was a dreamer. He had come when the family was at a low ebb. Even his mother took no pride in him, and called him Jabez as an indication of the discouraging conditions that surrounded his birth. But Jabez said: "If Almighty God will help me, and keep me from sin, and give me enlarged opportunity, I shall climb out of these conditions and do something for my

family and for the world." And so his constant prayer to God was that he might grow mentally and morally as well as in temporal affairs—that an ever larger and larger coast line might mark the boundary of his horizon.

There are two rooms which ought to be added to many modern houses. When Thoreau visited the Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal he wrote his thought of it, in the course of which he says: "It was a great cave in the midst of the city—and what were the altars and the tinsel but the sparkling stalactites?—into which you enter in a moment, and where the still atmosphere and the somber light disposed to serious and profitable thought.

"Perchance," said Thoreau, "the time will come when every house even will have not only its sleeping rooms, dining room, and talking room or parlor, but its thinking room also, and the architects will put it in their plans." Manhood and womanhood would be helped to growth and to enlargement of coast by the addition of a thinking room to every house; and if a man only has one room, some part of every day or night it should be turned into a thinking room.

The other room is the one which Jesus speaks of when he urges us to enter into the closet and shut the door and pray there to the God who sees in

secret and who, if we pray to him in secret, will reward us openly. There can be no enlargement of spiritual vision, there can be no growth of divine life in the soul, without secret communion and earnest private prayer to God.

And now, the result of this conduct on the part of Jabez is interesting. He became the most honorable man of the family. It was not only that he became a popular and famous man, but the words indicate that he became known as "Jabez the honorable." He had honor in himself. He was a man of real honor, and that is the most honorable thing in the world.

A little boy was on the scales, and, being very anxious to outweigh his playmate, he puffed out his cheeks and swelled up like a little frog. But the playmate was the wiser boy. "Oho!" he cried, in scorn, "that doesn't do any good; you can only weigh what you are!" He was a wise lad. Many men who write "Honorable" before their names do not weigh an ounce of honor before their fellow-men, and there are others who fool their fellow-men, but are light as a feather in the eyes of God. To have real honor we must have a manhood or a womanhood built on a sure foundation.

This little biography of Jabez naturally gives us the impression that Jabez began his noble career of

mental and spiritual growth as a boy. So his great character grew in honor year after year. All great things must grow like that.

It took Captain Alexander three years to lay the foundation of the stone tower on the famous Minot Ledge Rock, just outside Boston harbor. In a whole season his men only succeeded in cutting four or five little holes in the hard rock. First of all, the rock had to be scraped clean of seaweed, and to accomplish this the men worked with desperate energy. When a great wave came rolling in from the sea the foreman shouted, and they all fell on their faces, clinging together, and holding their breath until the rock was bare again. All the stones are built into one another by a marvelous system of dovetailing, so that even if it were tipped up it would not fall to pieces, on account of the ingenious manner in which one stone is grafted into its neighbor below, above, and around it. It was a long, hard piece of work to do, but once built it defies the storms and laughs in the teeth of the wind.

So Christian character must be built up block upon block, day by day, through patient and reverent work. But when it is builded and stands out in the sunlight of God's day it is the strongest and noblest and most beautiful structure in the world.

It is to this eternal and unshakable character I invite you at this time. If you are to build up such a personality there is no time to lose. It is folly to despair because so much time has been wasted. Bring to God what there is left. On the other hand, it is infinite folly to presume on your youth and say there is time enough yet, when if you give your whole life to goodness it is only possible by the grace of God to round out God's purpose for you, and every year you stay away from a life of complete harmony with God you are marring and dwarfing the possibilities of your own nature.

Let this little life story, that comes to us from thousands of years ago and yet is so full of life and humanness, quicken our thought, arouse us to do our duty, and give us a heavenly impulse toward a like honorable career!

CHAPTER III

SEVEN GREAT SINNERS AND THEIR CONFESSION

I have sinned.—*Luke xv, 18.*

THERE are seven men whose stories are told in the Bible who uttered these words. It can but be interesting to study the causes which led to their utterance and the results which came from them.

The first man who is recorded in the sacred story as having made this public confession is Pharaoh. When Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh with God's demand that he should let the Hebrews go forth from bondage he was full of defiance and threw down the glove of challenge and contempt for God and his messengers. Then came the storm of hail and thunder that destroyed the cattle in the pastures and left desolation in the forests throughout all the land of Egypt, while in Goshen, where the Hebrews lived, there was no storm at all. Then for the moment the proud heart of Pharaoh was cowed. He hated God. He hated Moses more than ever. But his forests were broken down and his cattle were dead and fear was upon him, and so he sent for Moses and Aaron, and when they

came he said: "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer."

Now, in this language of Pharaoh it is easy to see that the depths of Pharaoh's conscience are not stirred in the least. Note the expression, "I have sinned this time." What does it really mean? In the modern language of the day it means, "I have put my foot in it for once." Pharaoh felt that he had blundered. He had taken the wrong position, and he didn't want any more hail, and he wanted now to make the best bargain he could with God to escape further punishment. The words "I have sinned" have no deep significance to this wicked, hard-hearted man. Hence we are not surprised that Pharaoh did not live up to his promise. As soon as the Hebrews began to get ready to go he changed his mind and went ahead in his stiff-necked, hard-hearted rebellion against God. How often we see men to-day acting in the same way. A man has trouble in his business, ruin stares him in the face, or he fails in some great ambition and is laid low in the ignominy of defeat, or sickness comes into his house and one very dear to him is stricken unto death, and in the midst of his fear or

his anguish he exclaims, "I have sinned. I must quit it. God is angry with me. It has been a great blunder." And for a few days or a few weeks it looks like reformation; but down in the depths of the man's conscience it means nothing. There is no real loathing of sin, there is no real love for goodness, there is no real prayer to God.

23 The next man in the list is Balaam. Balaam was a prophet of God, and the enemies of the Lord offered to buy him up and give him a big price if he would bless them instead of Israel. Balaam was one of those peculiar creatures who are always trying to ride two horses, one of the men who are always trying to carry water on both shoulders—a man with many good impulses, and who wanted to finally wind up as a good man, and yet who in the meantime wanted to carry on a profitable business with the devil.

On his way to the camp of the enemy to carry out his wicked contract the Lord met him with an angel who stood with a drawn sword to warn him of his danger. God never lets any man go to hell without warning. He sends his angels to block the path and make it hard. When Balaam looked into the menacing eyes of the angel and saw the glittering sword in his hand his heart failed him, and he said, "I have sinned; for I knew not that thou

stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." But he didn't go back. He went on into one intrigue after another until he died on the battlefield, an open enemy of God, a warning to all men who try to serve both God and mammon.

My brother, you cannot be a good man and a bad man at the same time. It is utterly impossible for you to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man, a consciousness of a clean heart, and at the same time be enjoying the revenues of sin. You cannot be God's prophet and at the same time take the devil's bribes. And all protestations of confession of sin while you are still going on doing things which you know do not please God amount to nothing. Balaam confessed his sin, but there was no real repentance about it. He was as dishonest afterward as he was before, and it made no real change in his course. The confession of sin that brings the cleansing of the heart must go deeper than that.

The next man who made this confession whose name is enrolled in Scripture was Achan. It was in connection with the fall of Jericho. When Jericho was captured and overthrown the Lord had commanded against private plunder of silver and gold and fine garments, in which Jericho was rich,

and all such captured property was to go into the treasury of the Lord for the public good. It speaks well for the people and for the high average of virtue among them that only one man disobeyed this law. This man was Achan. Achan's besetting sin was covetousness and greed. He had the nose of a money-getter. He had the eye for rich and costly things. He had the avarice that loves to gloat over property though nobody else sees it or knows about it. He got a greedy satisfaction out of the mere consciousness of having rich and costly things. And so when Achan saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a huge wedge of gold, and noted that nobody else was looking, he tossed the silver and the gold into the garment and rolled it up and carried it into his tent. Then he pinned the door of the tent tight together. As quick as possible he dug a hole, put the whole bundle of plunder down into it, packed the dirt in tight above it, laid his rug across it, and who was the wiser? Ah, how many men there are who think they can cheat God that way! There seemed to be no way in the world to find out Achan. But they did find him out. No one told, for no one knew about it. But when the time came, and one by one they came before Joshua, the telltale soul of the man broke down

within him, and he confessed, "I have sinned! I have sinned!" He died for his sin. There is no indication that there was any moral change in the man. It was remorse that got hold of him. It was the haunting of conscience that drove him like a whipped cur to confession, but not to seek the forgiving mercy of God.

O my friends, there are two ways you can deal with sin. One is to bring your sins to judgment yourself, and confess them honestly at the mercy seat, and the other is to wait as Achan did until your sin puts a halter around your neck and drags you to judgment.

The fourth confession of this kind recorded in God's Word is that of Saul. Saul was a fine young fellow, and started out well. But he got proud and self-sufficient and refused to obey God. He grieved the Spirit of God until at last he quenched it altogether, and the heavenly light was withdrawn from him. In his last conversation with Samuel, God's prophet, Samuel said to him: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he

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hath also rejected thee from being king." Then Saul was truly frightened, and in that conversation he makes this most remarkable utterance to Samuel: "I have sinned: yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people." There was no real repentance in it. Saul went on growing worse and worse all the rest of his life. In his very last days he went around into dark caves at night, seeking clairvoyants, to try to get some light on the future, since he had quenched the Spirit of God.

But still he says, "I have sinned: yet honor me." Now, before you condemn Saul too harshly, ask yourself if you have not sometimes stood in his shoes. I am sure I have known men and women who were living exactly in Saul's attitude of mind at that time. They were frightened at their sins. They were alarmed at the fact that they were getting deeper into evil habits, and they were ready to confess their sins, and did actually pray to God to honor them while still going on in wicked ways. I have known men who were living in actual sin, day by day, and consciously so, and who would confess it if you asked them, and yet they never went to bed at night without asking God's protecting care over them. Such a confession of sin is worse than worthless. It is blasphemous.

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The next case to which I wish to call your attention, though not the next in the regular order of the historical story, is that of Judas. Judas, too, was a man who loved money. He liked the glitter of it. He liked to feel it heavy in his purse. He liked to feel the bag pull down and tug in his gown. He was the treasurer of that little company of friends who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry, and it almost threw Judas into convulsions when any money was spent for charity or any luxuries were provided for the divine Master, because it took the money out of the bag which he carried. Well, Judas did not know it, but all those three years he was letting this love of money grow on him he was getting ready for the great sin of betraying his Lord, and when the time was ripe he did it. He sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and with the money in his pocket he dared to kiss him into the hands of his enemies. Now Judas had never had thirty pieces of silver before that did not give him pleasure, and he had fondly imagined he would get happiness out of these, but he did not. He could not sleep. They made the bag heavier, indeed, but it was a weight that gave him no pleasure. In his nervousness that bag of money grew into a millstone about his neck, dragging him down, ever down, into the depths. As time went on it got

worse instead of better. It had always been a pleasure to him to handle money and to see it, but now there was nothing he loathed as he did money. He abhorred it; he could not bear to look at it; every piece of it seemed to be red with blood. Then he had an idea. As a drowning man clutches at a straw Judas clutched at it. "I will go and back out from that wicked trade. If I can only get rid of that money perhaps it will take the curse off the rest of my money, and I shall be able to take pleasure in the things that I did before." So Judas hurried away to the man who had bribed him. He had those thirty pieces of silver out in his hand all ready. He wasted no time in preliminaries. He was dead anxious. He had not slept. He had eaten nothing. His face was haggard and his hair was disheveled. His eyes were bloodshot. He muttered to himself as he walked on the street, so that children shrank away as he passed. In before the chief priests he came and blurted out, wildly: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" But they sneered at him, and said coldly and cruelly, "What is that to us? See thou to that." Poor Judas! He flung the money down on the floor and went away and hanged himself, rushing into the presence of his Maker a suicide. Judas's confession of sin was shaken out of him by

terrible and awful remorse. But there was no real repentance; there was no real yielding of the soul to God, no real acceptance of Christ as his Saviour that brought pardoning love, or there would have been no case of suicide.

The next confession, which I passed for the moment that we might have the logical order rather than the chronological, is that of David. Now, David had been a good man. His life from his childhood had been reverent toward God. In his childhood and youth he had lived close to God in prayer and in service. God had given him wonderful manifestations of his love for him, and the Spirit of God had dwelt in him. But after David came to be king and had great prosperity and large wealth and power he went astray. There are many men who live clean, pure lives when they are poor and struggling, who fall into grievous sin when they are prosperous. David was one of these. He sinned against God grievously, and the light of his heart went out. He was a backslider from God. Then it was that Nathan, as brave a man as ever lived, went into the presence of David, and in the form of a story pictured another man as doing exactly what David had done. David's attention was aroused. His heart was greatly stirred, and when the story was done the king said, "Who is the man

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that did that vile thing? He shall die!" Then Nathan stiffened a little through his entire figure. His face whitened. His eye burned like living fire. His arm lifted over his head, and straight as a die his finger came down level with the face of David as he exclaimed, "Thou art the man!"

The effect on David was electrical. Like a thunderclap it shook him in one second out of his lethargy and his indifference to his sin. Like a lightning flash it cleared his blindness with a streak of light, and he saw with horror the blackness of his guilt. In a moment he remembered God's goodness and his own base ingratitude to God. His heart broke. The tears coursed down his cheeks. There was no anger at Nathan for telling him the truth. There was no blustering. There was no self-pride. But, with choking utterance, David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Now, that was real confession of sin. It was genuine from the heart's core. It was from his soul. David not only loathed his sin, but he turned from it and came back to God, and we are not surprised that Nathan said to him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

Do I speak to any backsliding souls?—men and women who, like David, were Christian in their youth, and in their young manhood or young wom-

anhood, but who as life has gone on, have been snared by the tempter? You have been caught in the net which the evil one set for your feet. And at these blunt plain words about sin the Holy Spirit has turned the light on your own sin, and it seems terrible to you. You remember God's goodness. You remember the loving mercy of Jesus. You remember the sweet fellowship you once had with Christians. All the sweet peace of those years of Christian life comes back to you now, until your heart breaks, and you are ready to cry out, with David, "I have sinned against the Lord!" O, brother, sister, if it is in your heart, say it! Let nothing hold it back, for that is the way of salvation.

A single other case, and that in the briefest words—the young man whom Jesus tells us about, who got dissatisfied with home and the restrictions of his father's house and went away into a distant country. There, so long as his money lasted, he had a gay time. There were plenty of people ready to flatter him and fawn on him so long as he stood the treat, and paid for the dinner, and put up the premium for wicked indulgence. But when he got to the bottom of his purse he found, as multitudes of others have found, that the friends that are made in sin do not stand by in adversity. And



so, at last, he comes down to shame and want. He finds himself a feeder of hogs, with so little to eat that he feels it would add to his comfort if he could share with the hogs in their food. But one day he thinks it all over. Many men would be saved sooner if they would only take time to have a good think about it. As this poor boy thinks, there comes back to him the picture of the old home. He begins to compare his father with the men he has known since he came away, and the men he has found during the years of his extravagance, and he is astonished to see how the old father looms up like a prince, and all the other men he has known are dwarfs beside him. Then he remembers the hospitality and the abundance of the old home, and he says, "Why, a man had better be a slave to my father than to live out in this country in any position! I will go back and confess my wrongdoing, and get on as a servant. Of course I used to be his son, and a loved one at that, but my sins put that out of the question. But maybe I can get on as a servant." So he goes back. And as he comes near the old home the father sees him and comes running out to meet him. The boy's heart is in his throat. As the father runs up he tries to speak, but he has no chance. The father falls on his neck and kisses him, and cries over him. Then

the boy says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." That is as far as he ever got. There is a lot more he had fixed up to say, in his proposed effort to get hired as a servant, but the father saw the complete repentance in the coming back of his son, and that was enough for him. The father was not out hunting servants, his heart was hungry for sons. And so he cried, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

O wanderer from God, find in this your example. God is that father. You are that prodigal. Come home to him now!

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN WHO WAS ALWAYS READY

I am ready.—*Romans i, 15.*

MR. SPURGEON once said that the Apostle Paul might well have taken these three words as the motto of his religious life. It would be hard to make a motto for such a many-sided man as was Paul, and yet these words are certainly a fair indication of the man's character and conduct. It is interesting to study some of the points where Paul stood like a racer stripped for the course and could say with full purpose of heart, "I am ready."

The immediate utterance of our text had to do with his readiness to go to Rome and preach the Gospel there. It might be well to lay the emphasis for the benefit of our hearts on Paul's readiness to *preach* the Gospel which he had himself accepted. There are many Christians who take their religion so lightly that while they are church members and call themselves by the name of Christian, they never think of preaching their faith in Jesus Christ or of proclaiming their love for and confidence in him even to their most intimate acquaintances and

associates. I am convinced that Christianity in our time loses more at this point than at any other. If you will read the Acts of the Apostles with this thought in mind you will be struck with the fact that the most important characteristic of all the early Christians was the aggressive quality of the lay Christians. They were all preachers. The only difference between them was that some were missionary preachers who went abroad and spent all their time at it, while others continued to follow their regular business avocations; but every one preached. There were no neutral Christians—if such a thing were possible. Every Christian was a firebrand, a live coal burning a hole of religious conviction about him wherever he went.

We need this aggressive attitude of the individual layman to-day. Are you a Christian? Have you accepted Christ as your friend and Saviour? Then say so to the people. Hold yourself ready on every opportunity to preach the Gospel which has come to you.

Paul was ready to face danger. Rome was the danger point of the world for Christianity at that time. The bloodthirsty Nero ruled in Rome. To preach the Gospel there was to put your head into the tiger's mouth. But Paul was ready. He was

the type of man whom difficulties do not hinder. Christ had saved his soul. He believed Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. Jesus Christ had faced difficulty and danger and given his life on the cross for him. So Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and I am ready to go to Rome, in the teeth of opposition and persecution, and preach the Gospel there." And all the time he was in Rome he was ready, until he honeycombed the palace of Nero with Christian men and women, who in turn were ready to give their lives in testimony for Jesus Christ. Are we ready to stand for Jesus in the face of difficulty? Are we ready to lose money, or friendship, or pleasant associations, in order that we may be the more loyal to our divine Lord? Can we truthfully say, as Paul did, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"? Are we ready in uncomfortable situations to preach Jesus?

Not long ago a Christian man was sitting in company with other gentlemen, when a rude, brutal-looking man came in, full of some grievance against the railroad company, and delivered himself of a string of blasphemous oaths. The Christian man immediately said to him, "It causes me much discomfort and pain to hear the name of Christ spoken in that way, and I would be greatly

obliged if you would refrain from doing it in my presence."

The man looked at him in perfect astonishment, and then said, with an angry swagger, "You attend to your own business and I will attend to mine."

The Christian traveler earnestly but gently replied, "It is my business to defend the name of Christ, my Saviour, and I repeat that I will be very much obliged if you will restrain yourself from speaking disrespectfully of my best Friend in my presence."

Nothing more was said; but though they were on the train for many hours together it was noticed by all the men present that the man who had been thus rebuked refrained from using an oath in any subsequent conversation.

Would it not be well for every Christian to be ready in the face of discomfort, and even of embarrassing criticisms, to stand openly loyal to Jesus Christ, his Saviour?

But the readiness of Paul in Christ's service comes out more strongly yet in the account which is given in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul's visit to Cæsarea and of the farewell of the Christians there on his departure. They were afraid for him to go to Jerusalem, fearing that he would be thrown into the prison. But Paul said, "What mean ye to

weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul showed on many other occasions that he was ready to stand that greatest test of all, of *being bound* for Jesus. To a man of Paul's temperament we can easily understand that this would be one of the hardest of all things to bear. For a man who loves work and who is a bundle of electric energy to be held in chains, knowing there is so much to be done, conscious of the power to do it, and yet restrained—that is hard indeed. The place of waiting is often a harder place than the place of wrestling. Possibly some of you who read are in that hard spot of waiting. Sickness or misfortune, either of your own or of some one associated with you, has bound you, and restrained your activity, and you can only wait. There is work you have dreamed of doing. You have had hopes and anticipations that stirred your soul to the depths. And now all your planning seems to be crumbling like an air castle while you wait, bound by circumstances which you cannot control. I am sure this must be God's message for you. It is just as true of you in your place as it was of Paul in his that your first and highest duty lies in being ready to be bound for Christ's sake. Duties never cross one another. If your duty holds

you to a point of inaction, where you can only watch and wait, then the highest service which you can do for your Lord is to wait patiently and sweetly and show by your cheerful confidence that you do not doubt your Saviour.

Whittier sings one of his noblest songs especially for you who just now are given "The Harder Task of Standing Still."

"I wait and watch; before my eyes
Methinks the night grows thin and gray;
I wait and watch the eastern skies
To see the golden spears uprise.
Beneath the oriflamme of day!

"Like one whose limbs are bound in trance
I hear the day sounds swell and grow,
And see across the twilight glance
Troop after troop, in swift advance,
The shining ones with plumes of snow!

"I know the errand of their feet,
I know what mighty work is theirs;
I can but lift up hands unmeet
The threshing floors of God to beat,
And speed them with unworthy prayers.

"I will not dream in vain despair
The steps of progress wait for me;
The puny leverage of a hair
The planet's impulse well may spare,
A drop of dew the tided sea.

"The loss, if loss there be, is mine,
 And yet not mine if understood;
 For one shall grasp and one resign,
 One drink life's rue, and one its wine,
 And God shall make the balance good.

"O power to do! O baffled will!
 O prayer and action! ye are one.
 Who may not strive may yet fulfill
 The harder task of standing still,
 And good but wished with God is done!"

The unselfishness of Paul's spirit and the depth of his generous love for humanity is shown in connection with the expressions of his *readiness to bear the burdens of others*, even though he was misunderstood and his efforts not appreciated. He served men because he loved them in the brotherhood of Christ. I do not know where you would find a nobler utterance than in the closing part of his second letter to the Corinthians, when he says: "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you. . . . I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

This readiness of Paul's to bare his shoulders in service has made him, after Christ, the chief figure of early Christianity. Peter had the start, and the great opportunity, and though he came to be a good

and great man and a loyal servant for Christ, Paul's abounding labors and absolute surrender to bear burdens in Jesus's name made him the chief figure. This spirit of readiness to throw all one's soul into service is the secret of all great triumphs.

It is said that several famous men were sitting around a dining table in Oxford University, England, a few years ago, and fell into a discussion, which lasted far into the night, upon the question, "What is necessary to the production of a great work of art, or a great book, or a great poem, or any great thing?" At last they agreed that there were in all cases three prime elements of power—abnegation, intoxication, and concentration: abnegation, the power of cutting one's self off from everything that weakens or separates from the chosen task, and the sinking of one's preference in a full surrender to the work in hand; then, intoxication, in the good sense of the word—that is, exhilaration or enthusiasm, a sort of divine readiness; and then, concentration, or the withdrawal of the mind from all that dissipates its energies, so that it may be focused on one thing, until it is finished, forever.

The great souls whose work has won them the name of genius have shown these characteristics,

They tell us that Michael Angelo would seize his mallet and fly at a block of marble like an insane giant until he had liberated from it his conception of a David or a Moses. A divine readiness for his work possessed him. The work of Paul was like that. His readiness was not that of a man sitting in his place and waiting, half wishing the opportunity would not come, but of a man who watched with enthusiasm for the opportunity to serve others. And that holy joy which filled Paul's mind and heart and made life always a sweet and beautiful thing for him, so that happy contentment possessed him in all conditions and circumstances, was only the reward which God gives ever to unselfish souls who are ready to serve others.

One evening last summer the Hudson River Yacht Club was holding a reception. There was a large float moored outside the house, and during the festivities a number of children went upon it to play. They had not been there long when the guests heard them screaming in terror that a boy was drowning. A little six-year-old had slipped off the float into the deep water. In an instant the commodore of the club, who happened to be standing on the balcony, leaped into the water, without waiting even to throw off his coat or shoes. He caught the child as he rose to the surface, and was

amazed beyond utterance to see that it was his own son. He was so overcome that he could scarcely move, but soon recovered and swam with him to the bank, where eager hands relieved him of his burden. The boy was unconscious, but was soon restored. You may imagine the father's thankfulness, for when he plunged into the river he did not know that his own boy was in danger, but in being ready to save others he saved his own heart and home from being torn with agony.

Paul was ready to die. He was not only not afraid to die and willing to endure it when the time came, but with a quick and buoyant step and with a happy heart and face he went forth to the block from whence he was to take his departure. There is nothing more splendid as an utterance of human faith and courage than that oft-quoted paragraph which the old hero writes in his letter to his young friend Timothy: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Death has no terrors for a man like that. He has done his duty

in life, and death to him is only a reward. He is not dragged like a prisoner to a dungeon, he is rather like the soldier who has been at war in a foreign land, where he has carried the flag of his country to victory, and who is going home to receive honor and appreciation. He cares not for the hardships and the trials of the campaign, since victory has been won, and he is going home to wear his laurels. So Paul is going home to meet Christ, his Saviour, and receive from his lips the applause which is dearest to his heart.

Now, if we want to find the secret of all this glorious career of Paul, we must go back to that day on the road to Damascus when Christ called Paul for the first time—when out of the very sky the voice sounded, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” It was Paul’s readiness then that was the source of all his after success. If in the face of that knowledge that Jesus was the one divine Lord and Saviour, and that in him alone is salvation, Paul had gone on stubbornly and indifferently, refusing to turn about and change his conduct, his life would have gone out in darkness as Saul, the stubborn and the wicked, and the name of Paul would have been unknown to us. But, hearing the call of Christ and seeing his sin, Paul was ready to

repent, ready to confess his sins, ready to be led to the house of prayer, ready to cry out to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Some one, no doubt, at this moment stands at that very point. Even as you read Christ has called you, the Holy Spirit has shown you your sins. You feel that Christ is the Saviour of men and that he may be your Saviour. Will you follow Paul's example? The light is shining into your conscience. Christ is asking for admission into your life. Yield to him now!

CHAPTER V

A KING'S CONVERSION

And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.—2 *Chron.* xxxiii, 12, 13.

THERE is a saying among the Arabs that all sunshine makes the desert. It is a common thing for men to long for exemption from affliction and sorrow, imagining that that would be the chief good. But great and good characters have never been developed yet out of an atmosphere that was wholly sunshine. Affliction is often the only method by which God can save a man's soul. Many a man who has run riot in presumptuous sins during the days of his health and prosperity has found in times of affliction his need for God and spiritual things which he had not before appreciated. Many have not known the deep pangs of spiritual thirst until the earthly waters were beyond their reach. They do not feel their need of God so long as man is kind to them and they have abundance of this world's comfort.

Mr. Spurgeon, speaking of this need of God—or, rather, consciousness of need—which is described in the Scriptures as a thirst, says thirst is nothing actual or substantive; it is a lack, a want, crying out of its emptiness. It is the absence of the necessary. Thirst is a painful need. Thirst is an emptiness. It is the missing of that which is essential to life. The need naturally begets a pain. When our system needs drink a merciful Providence creates a pang, so that we are driven to take notice that a requisite of life must be immediately supplied. Thirst rings the alarm bell and the mind and body set to work to supply the urgent demand. It were a dreadful thing if the system needed water and yet did not thirst; for we might be fatally injured before we knew that any harm was happening to us. The pain of thirst is a salutary warning that something very important is wanted. And, so if you are suffering from fear or despondency; if you are enduring heaviness of heart and disquietude of spirit; if you have a longing, a sighing, a pining after something better and holier, then you are spiritually thirsty. And that thirst is the call of God to come to him through Jesus Christ for the satisfaction and peace of soul which he alone can give.

Manasseh began to reign as king when he was

only twelve years old, and he was a king for fifty-five years. In the days of his youth and power he was proud and sinful. He was the son of one of the noblest of men. So good a man was Hezekiah that he was known throughout the world as "the good Hezekiah." But many a son who has had a good father has forgotten his father's God when he has gone forth into life for himself. Sin never looks so black and terrible as when it is committed by a man or a woman who has been reared in a praying family, and who has had the teaching and the influence of sincere, godly parents. There was no excuse for Manasseh, for his childhood had been surrounded by the best of influences; but he came early to power, and that is a bad thing. He was not well seasoned. The nations about him were wicked, and he fell in with their idolatries and built altars to strange gods. He went off after spiritualism, and sought out clairvoyants and witches and wizards and that ilk. If he had devoted as much time to true religion as he did to all these experiments and follies he would have been a great blessing to his people; but as it was his influence was very demoralizing. The nation began to run down in moral fiber. They lost their prestige and their power and became a prey to the very nations whose false religions had already under-

mined the source of their strength. Do not imagine that they had come to this place unwarned. The historian says, "The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken." Joseph Parker, commenting on this warning, says these are what we call remonstrances. Sometimes the expostulation is addressed to the heart in a sweet tone; it comes through the ministry of father, mother, pastor, or friend; sometimes it is lowered to a whisper; then it becomes piercing as a cry, then there comes the sharper warning that leaves the sting of pain and remorse behind it. It is God's Spirit striving with a man's conscience. It is a strange thing that God can call and a man refuse to hearken. It is possible to shut all of the sunshine out of your house until it is as dark at high noon as at midnight; and so it is possible to shut your ears and harden your conscience against the warnings of God; but God help the man who does it! Sorrow and affliction and distress are sure to follow.

When Manasseh would not hear the warning of God the king of Assyria came down upon him with a large army. The record says, "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried

him to Babylon." How has the mighty king fallen to be treated like that! . Do you know what that little phrase "among the thorns" means? It means that the king of Assyria took Manasseh with hooks—put one hook through his nostril and another hook through his lip—and thus led him to Babylon. I have seen a hog dragged to the slaughter tub in the same way. So Manasseh the king was dragged to his dungeon. The man who had been too proud to humble himself before God now walks through the dusty street with his arms tied down to his side, and with hooks in his nose and his upper lip, led whithersoever his cruel captor pleases. Sin is a captor just like that. Have you never seen a man with the fetters of sin on him?—a man trying to break away from some vicious habit that has enslaved him, and yet is held helpless in his chains of bondage? How sin does lead men around by the nose and the lip! Some, I doubt not, who read this are painfully conscious that Satan has a hook through your lip and leads you captive to commit the sin that you are ashamed of and that you know is drawing you to ruin. Every drunkard is a sinner with a hook through his lip, made to parade his shame from day to day; and many another sinner whose sin is more hidden is nevertheless the devil's captive and likely to be

paraded as such before all the world at any time. And though a man might succeed in hiding it here even until the last, there is coming a time when every unforgiven sin will be known. It is far more terrible to have our sins drag us to the judgment and condemn us when it is too late to seek pardon than it is for us to denounce them now and secure our release.

We can well imagine the awful misery and agony of Manasseh. He had been a great king. He had been treated with adoration and deference. And now to be led around like a wild beast must have been terrible. No man knows what will happen to him when he gives way to sin. It is the most dangerous thing in the universe. A strange thing happened in New Jersey some time ago. A railroad station was broken into and considerable property stolen from the freight office. Among the things carried off was a box of dynamite cartridges. The thieves evidently thought it contained valuables. They were seen driving away in a wagon, but it was not then known that they had been engaged in a robbery. When they had reached a lonely part of the road they stopped to rearrange the load on the wagon. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion, which was heard for many miles around. People who were awakened by the noise

and shock, looking from their windows, saw the wagon being driven at headlong speed. It was in a badly shattered condition and was covered with blood. In it were men who were almost torn to pieces. Some were dead and others were dying. Not often does retribution come so promptly and so terribly, but that incident suggests the explosive quality of sin. The sinner is always walking over a powder mine; he is always treading on dynamite; he is never sure when his sin will find him out and its punishment be brought home.

Manasseh had been accustomed to live in a palace and sleep on the softest down, in an atmosphere perfumed with rare odors; but now he sleeps on the stone floor of a dungeon and breathes the fetid atmosphere of an underground prison. But that bed was more kind to him than the other; for it was there that thoughts of repentance came to him. In his affliction he thought of the God of his father, the God of his childhood and youth, the God of all the earth. He humbled himself before God, and cried aloud for divine mercy. And God heard his prayer. God had warned him and he would not hearken, but God hearkens to the cry of his children, though they be undeserving. And far away in the dungeon, a disgraced and humiliated

prisoner, Manasseh was a greater man than he was in the days of his pride, when he sat on a throne. For now he was abasing himself on his knees before God, and the God who has power to lift up kings and cast them down again has power to exalt the man who has humbled himself.

And so God brought Manasseh back again to his own land and to his kingdom. But he was a changed man. The idols were torn down and Manasseh, in the most public manner possible, offered thanksgiving to God, who had forgiven his sins and had not only brought him back from captivity but had given him peace and comfort in his own heart.

A mother who had been away from home for a few days at a time on several occasions was accustomed to bring to each of her children some little gift. One day she purposely neglected the gifts. The little ones met her in the hall, their faces bright with expectation. "I did not bring you any presents this time," said the mother, "because—" but she did not get any farther. The little babe of all cried out, "We don't care, mamma dear, you is the bestest present." So I have no doubt Manasseh said to God. Surely the greatest gift that God can give is himself, and the richest blessing that anyone can receive is the gift of forgiveness through

Jesus Christ and the conscious presence of God in the heart.

Manasseh had nothing to offer God but his own poor, broken, and disgraced life. His poor, bruised heart was all he had to give. And so you may have nothing to bring, no merit of your own to plead. You can only throw yourself humbly at the mercy seat and in Christ's dear name, who died for your redemption, ask and receive the forgiveness of your sin. Then the peace of God will come and dwell in your heart. The false gods will be cast out; the enemies that led you captive and bound you in fetters will be overthrown; you will be a free man. But in your freedom your highest joy will be to serve God with a loving and grateful heart.

CHAPTER VI

THE LEPROSY OF UZZIAH

He was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.—*2 Chron. xxvi, 15, 16.*

THE story of Uzziah reads like a romance. His father before him had been a king, and, as kings went in those days, a very good one. Uzziah came to the throne at an early age. At the end the father's life went out in darkness, and the son, only sixteen years of age, came to reign in his stead. He was a brilliant young man; he was full of vigor and force, and he was remarkably fortunate in having for a friend a man named Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God. We do not know much about Zechariah, or whether he was young or old. Nothing more is said concerning him. He may have been the young man's teacher. In any event he had a good influence over the young king, and his earnest nature and clear spiritual insight made a deep impression on the vigorous mind of the prince and caused him to seek

God and to live for many years a life that was pleasing to him.

Uzziah was a versatile man and was interesting from almost any standpoint. He was a great tower builder. He built three great towers in Jerusalem and fortified them. He built other towers in the desert, no doubt as fortresses. He was famous as a well-digger, a very important matter in the far East. He was fond of farming and stock raising. He had great herds of cattle both in the low countries and in the hills. He encouraged the planting of orchards and vineyards. Indeed, he seemed to have great interest in all living things. Uzziah was fond of everything that had life in it. He was the Theodore Roosevelt of his time. As the years went on, and his seat in the saddle as king became more secure, he began to enlarge his dominions. He increased his armies and invented battle engines—a sort of rude cannon—to shoot arrows and great stones. For a long time he was very successful, and his name went far abroad. The historian says, “He was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.”

How different his case from that of Abraham! God helped Abraham, too, and gave him great pros-

perity and large wealth, until he became the richest and most powerful man in the East; but he did not become wicked and rebellious because he was strong. Instead, Abraham held his strength to have been given him of God to use for the help of others and for the service of God. Lot had treated Abraham very meanly, and yet when he heard that his nephew was carried away into captivity Abraham pursued and risked his own life and the lives of all his people to rescue him. Wherever Abraham when he built an altar to God, and as he became stronger and more powerful his fame was spread abroad and he was known as "the friend of God." Strength and power should always be regarded as given to us of God as a stewardship, and we should feel that it is an obligation to thanksgiving and reverence toward God and helpfulness and sympathy to our fellow-men.

But the great mistake of Uzziah was that when he became strong and powerful he became proud and rebellious, and thus brought about his own ruin. Our text says, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." A man comes down by going up as often as not. We are accustomed to think of it the other way. A man loses his property, or his health, or his position, or troubles and sorrows come to him, and we think

that these things may cause his discouragement and overthrow; but the fact is that a man is usually in more danger of being overthrown and defeated morally when he is going up in triumph than when he is being disappointed and seemingly overcome. Many a man who has been able to stand adversity and maintain his honor has become corrupt and immoral in the flush of success.

The ruin of Uzziah came about in a very striking way. The man's whole life had been dramatic and picturesque, and the doom that fell upon him was in tragic and awful harmony with the past. He became proud and arrogant, so that he determined that he would not only be king, but he would also usurp the functions of the priests and take possession of the altar of God. This was in direct violation of God's law; but as Uzziah grew strong and proud sin did not seem so terrible to him as in his youth. For a great king to disobey God did not seem to be so awful as for an ordinary man. How many there are who excuse themselves in that way. Men and women think that there are some peculiarly excusing circumstances which surround them which relieves them from the ordinary obligations to keep the law of God. They forget that God is no respecter of persons, and that king and peasant, society woman and washerwoman, banker

and digger in the street, stand on an absolute level before the throne of God.

Uzziah presumed on his fame and his kingly personality and dared to go before the altar and take upon himself the functions of God's priests. If the priests had been corrupt or cowardly they would have kept still; but they were brave, true men, and when they knew of the desecration of the altar by the king they faced him there and withstood him and ordered him out of the sanctuary. The king was very angry, and no doubt would have destroyed the men who had dared thus to rebuke him if the hand of God had not fallen upon him in punishment. But even as he raged, with the burning censer in his hand, the hand of God fell upon him in punishment for his sin. On his face and forehead the white curse of leprosy, the most dreaded plague of all the East, was revealed, and, feeling the doom that had come upon him, he went out in sorrow and despair. His day of reigning was over. He lived alone in a little house by himself, which was practically a prison. Though he lived a while longer, it was the life of a leper without power and without honor. What sorrowful years they must have been, remembering as he would the days of his young manhood, when he was the proudest and most famous king in the world,

when his armies were always victorious and his days full of gladness. He realized the truth of Tennyson's song:

"This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier
things."

It is significant to note that King Uzziah did not lose his religion and become a blasphemous sinner against God by staying away from the church, as is the case with many people, but his ruin came upon him with sacred influences about him and at God's altar. With the fragrance of the censer in his nostrils, and God's priests all about him, he committed sin and received his doom. This suggests to us a terrible fact—that one may fall away from God and lose all spiritual life and become hard-hearted and rebellious, and yet be living all the while within sound of the church bells, may even be attending the church and taking part in the services while religion and morality are dying in the heart. Let us understand that while the religious life has naturally fallen into certain recognized forms, forms do not make up true religion any more than the pipe through which the living water runs is competent to slake thirst. It is the water and not the pipe that gives life, and the pipe

is only the channel through which it flows. The church and the minister and the religious services are the channel through which, if you will, the water of life may come to your souls. But you may shut your heart against these things, even while you hear sermons and hymns and attend services, until they convey to you no divine influence. The formal religion has in it no saving power. If I address any who, like King Uzziah, once drank of the water of life and were refreshed by it and strengthened by it to do the right, but who have grown indifferent and proud until it is beginning to be easy to sin against God with presumption, let me arouse you to the folly and the peril of your sin. The fact that your name is on a church record, or that you associate with Christian people, or that you are even engaged in church work, is of no avail if your heart is getting weaned away from God and you are becoming rebellious against your heavenly Father.

Poor old King Uzziah! His heart was leprous before it showed in his face, and so many men are weaned away from God and are sinners at heart before there is any open sign of it. The power of habit, the influence of public sentiment, holds them back for a long time; but at last the sinful heart will have its way and some sinful act shows the

mark of the leper on the man's forehead before all the world. My brother, my sister, are you conscious of the leprosy of sin in your heart? Down in the secret imaginations and purposes of your soul are you sure that your heart is not in harmony with God but rebels against him? Then, I beg of you, do not let it remain so, for you are constantly under the condemnation of God's law. You have deserted him, and some day the punishment of a deserter from God must surely come, unless you seek and obtain the divine pardon. What folly to go on praying to God to give you this blessing and that blessing while all the time you are a deserter and a rebel against God's love and God's law! There is no greater folly than to expect that God will give you special mercies while all the time you are cherishing secret sins which have taken you away from God. The prayer of the sinner is for forgiveness. David had the order right when he said, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, . . . who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." The loving-kindness and the tender mercies follow forgiveness for iniquity.

Rev. Mark Guy Pearse has recently retold an old historical story of great interest. About the year 1750 there lived in Hanover a teacher of music who struggled to find a living for himself

and his family of ten children. Of these one was a lad named William, a sharp, bright boy, clever at figures and skillful at music, who when only fourteen years of age was able to take his place in the royal band. He found it was all very well to be a soldier as long as it meant being dressed in a smart uniform and helping to make fine music which the citizens came out on a summer's evening to hear and applaud. But there came a day when war was declared by the French against the English, and as George III was also king of Hanover, the enemy marched against that country. Then it was too much—the whistling bullets, the boom of cannon, the killed and wounded to right and left of him, the towns on fire, the terrified people, homeless and starving; all this was very different from the fine music of the band. At the close of a day's battle the poor lad lay almost dead with hunger and cold, and spent the night in a ditch. He had had fighting enough for a lifetime. So he deserted from the army. But as it was unsafe to remain in Hanover his friends managed to send him to England.

He was only nineteen years old when he reached the town of Bath, and after many discouragements obtained a position as organist. Gradually he became famous as a musician, and in addition to his

pupils he conducted concerts and oratorios which added to his fame. His studies as a musician in the theory of music gave him a love of mathematics, which in turn led to his studying astronomy. He had no appliances beyond the use of a little telescope which he borrowed from a friend.

Telescopes in those days were costly things, far beyond the reach of his purse. He was not to be daunted, however, but determined to make a telescope. It was really a tremendous undertaking. A metal mirror had to be made—a mixture of copper and tin which, when combined in certain quantities, produced a substance so brittle that the least degree of haste in preparing it or carelessness in dealing with it would shatter it instantly. It had then to be ground and polished with such precision that the slightest irregularity or flaw would render it useless. At length, however, it was completed.

His toil was gloriously rewarded. From ages reaching back to the farthest distance the astronomers had recognized five well-known planets, whose very names implied their age and origin—Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Mercury, and Mars. Several centuries had failed to add to the number. But this musician, eagerly watching, found far away, on

the very outskirts of our solar system, a star which arrested his attention. It seemed to move, and yet could it be that he so soon had found what the watchers of the ages had failed to discern? Another planet! With trembling eagerness he left his duties as a musician, night after night, to watch this star through his telescope, until the fact was established beyond all doubt. Then he ventured to proclaim his discovery. The world of science was stirred beyond measure. The name of Herschel and the story of what he had done filled the papers, both in England and on the Continent. Great men began to communicate with him until his fame as an astronomer stood higher than any living man. The king sent for him to Windsor. Thither, with his faithful sister Caroline, who used to sit recording his observations on nights sometimes so cold that the pen froze in the ink, Herschel journeyed, taking his telescope with him. He was received in state and ushered into the royal apartment.

But one thing he had forgotten. The famous musician, the still more famous astronomer, whose fame was on all lips, was a deserter from the king's army. How could the king receive him? How could the king treat with him? No discovery that Herschel could make in the heaven above or in the earth beneath could undo that fact of desertion or

remove the penalty that it involved. As the king rose to receive the astronomer, before saying a word about his discovery, he put into his hand a paper. Herschel opened it, wondering, and read it. There in the king's own handwriting was his pardon as a deserter from the army. Then, but not till then, the king could receive him as the astronomer. That pardon, written by the king's own hand and sealed by the king's own seal, must come first and clear the way. Then, but not till then, could the king hear the story of his discovery. He must be forgiven first, and then the king could bestow the marks of royal favor. Then he could be appointed astronomer royal, go to live near the king's own palace, and come by the king's loving favor to be Sir William Herschel. The king was only following God's order—first forgiving the sin, then crowning the forgiven one with loving-kindness and mercies.

I am sure there are some who read to whom this old historical story ought to be as a call from God. Like King Uzziah you have wandered away from God, your sin has driven you into presumption against him, and the leprosy which is already upon your heart threatens you with final doom and punishment. But I come to you with this glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I talk to you of the

pardon in his name, a pardon written in his blood and signed by the hand that was nailed to the cross. If you will forsake your sins, and with humility of heart and penitence of soul seek this pardon in faith in Christ's name, it shall be yours. And with that pardon there shall come into your life, here and hereafter, all the loving-kindness and mercy of your heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VII

THE FEAST OF SOULS

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. —*Psalm lxxiii, 5-7.*

I KNOW very well what David had for supper the night when he wrote this psalm, and I am the only man here who does know unless there is another, as there probably is, who has known the joys of the hunt and the intoxication of the chase for the wild deer on the mountains. Ah, the vigor of it, and the gladness of it!—the balsam of the fir sending forth healing into the air, the tinkling music of the little brook that plunges over the bowlders and hides itself under the overhanging rock, widening in deep pools where the startled trout dart out of the light into the darkness as you come splashing by. How the heart beats at the sight of the antlers on the great buck! How the fever gets into the blood as the hunter tries to steady his gun and take aim at the splendid target!

Then there is the meeting in the evening around the camp fire, the broiled venison steak done to a turn from a forked stick held over the fire; and then for dessert the long marrow bones are stuck into the coals and hot ashes, and they roast there until they crack open, and the hunters fill themselves with the delicious marrow. It all sounds very tame here, in a city church, with no hunger upon you. But how different it is in the mountain canyon, with the night breezes caressing the fragrant branches of the trees into plaintive melody, with the boom of the night hawk ringing in your ears, with the hunger of a day's fast and the weariness of twenty miles of climbing over the hills and the odor of the fragrant venison bones in your nostrils!

Now, this psalm was written by David in the wilderness. He was in exile, hiding away from Saul, who sought his life. He had with him a band of as daring young fellows as ever breathed, and they loved David with all their hearts. The three young fellows who once risked their lives to bring him a gourd full of water from the old well of Bethlehem by the gate were only a sample of the lot. Daring, heroic, devoted, loving men they were, and David was the idol of their hearts. And that day on the mountain they had killed deer. I am sure of it. You see, they lived from hand to

mouth, depending very largely upon what they could kill by their own prowess as hunters. That day they had had good luck, and the camp fire had been bright and joyous. Honest eyes had looked across the blaze into other honest eyes, and tried friendship and confidence had added to the happiness of the evening meal. They had filled themselves with the broiled venison, washed down with ale from the spring of cold water that burst out from the hillside; and then, as men now crack stories sitting over the walnuts and toying with the cheese and the after-dinner coffee, these sturdy mountaineers had roasted the marrow bones and sucked the delicious delicacy as they talked.

And now they are all asleep save one. David, that marvelous combination of a man, brave as a lion, tender as a woman, man of affairs, marvel of practical common sense, and yet with it all a dreamer and a poet, lies awake looking up at the stars, dreaming of the God behind the stars, and reflecting that, despite all his hardships and trials, God is infinitely good to him, much better than he deserves, and that he has the greatest reason for thanksgiving and gladness. And as he thinks it over he gets up, or perhaps he only turns about on his pallet beside the fire to stir up the flame a little, so that he can see to write, and on an old

piece of manuscript, a rude thing such as they used in those days, David begins to write in Hebrew the words that are in his heart. Naturally the imagery of the day that he has passed through comes back into his mind as he undertakes to give expression to his gratitude. It has been a hot day and they were a long time without water, and the intense thirst has given him a new appreciation of the value of cool, refreshing water; and so to-night, as he longs to know more of God and to have closer communion with him, it is out of his heart that he writes: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

Nothing will make a man appreciate his church privileges so much as to be shut away for a while from their opportunity, as David is now; and as he remembers the rapturous joy he has had sometimes in the house of God he thirsts for it. Then he recalls God's great goodness to him, and he takes the pen and writes on: "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name." Then he remembers the feast of the evening. There lie the marrowbones,

some of them, beside the fire, and he seizes upon them to carry their spiritual message as he writes with confidence: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."

That word "bed" is plural in Hebrew, and is supposed to have been so intended by David. You see, hunted as he was from one mountain to another, from one wild wood to another, David's bed was a very movable affair. His bedroom was all outdoors. The canopy of his tent was decked with stars. Its walls were the forest trees. Often his bed was only the bare ground, with the skin of some wild animal he had slain to keep him from the earth and something like it with which to cover himself. And so David had had many a bed that gave him reminiscences of and meditation upon God's goodness and communion with the Divine Heart in the night watches.

Now I want to point out some of the reasons why this is the best kind of a dinner ever served. First, it was independent of earthly surroundings. It did not depend upon the wealth of David, upon the number of his followers, nor on his outlook for the immediate future. None of these things could

keep David from that delicious feast which he had alone with God when all others slept, when the world withdrew itself into silence. When there were none to see and none to listen, then it was that the heavenly visitants came and white-robed angels stood about David's couch upon the ground and brought to him the marrow and fatness of hope and faith and love. Then his soul fed on dainties and was made to rejoice until his lips burst forth into thanksgiving.

The delicious character of this feast is also evidenced in the fact that it does not enervate, but makes strong the soul. After David had rejoiced in the life-giving water and the rich marrow of his meditation he finished his psalm with these splendid words: "My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped."

Do you not notice how strong and courageous David becomes after that midnight communion with God? The heavenly marrow and fatness have not been in vain. He has been like a fox hunted to the

earth; he has only a little handful of followers hidden in a mountain camp; yet see how he calls himself "king." How does he get the courage to do it? It is his midnight communion with God that gives it to him. He remembers that it was God's prophet that had ordained him to be king. He feels again the holy oil upon his head, and his soul thrills through and through with the happy faith that God's will cannot be thwarted. Though the trial and hardship may endure for a little while, the daylight is at hand, and ere long his enemies shall be overthrown and he shall be king indeed.

My friends, that is the sort of feasting which you and I need to make us brave and strong to do the will of God and to go forth day by day to that service with which God has honored us. A meal like this will revive our courage in regard to the building up of our own characters and the developing within us of those kingly qualities which belong to the sons of God. How often Satan sneers at us and seeks to make us believe that the best goodness, the truest nobility, the most splendid and most heroic sainthood is beyond and out of the reach of such people as we are! O brothers, sisters, follow David's example, meditate and commune with God in secret reflection and in quiet private prayer, and you shall feast upon the mar-

row and the fatness, upon the good things which God shall give you there, until your eyes shall be clear and your courage strong and your heart brave to go forth, following hard after God, determined to win everything that belongs to you as the children of the Highest.

This is the best dinner ever served for another reason which David had discovered. He says: "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." What did David mean by that? Surely he must have meant that it was better to be in that wilderness, living from hand to mouth, hunted from hill to hill like a wolf, doing the will of God, conscious that God's loving-kindness was about him, than to be the king, owned and recognized by everybody, without God's presence and love. Better than mere living, better than any mere worldly success or honor, was the consciousness that he was pleasing God. Hid as he was from the world, still he was serving God; and service is better than display.

Do you remember that old parable in the book of Judges which tells how the trees went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, "Reign thou over us." But the olive tree said unto them, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go

to be promoted over the trees?" And the trees said to the fig tree, "Come thou, and reign over us." But the fig tree said unto them, "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" And then they chose the vine, but the vine, too, refused to quit bearing grapes in order to be king. And it was not until they got to the bramble, a contemptible bush that had no love for service, that they found one willing to forsake service for display and power. So the consciousness that we are serving God and our fellow-men, and that God is pleased with us, and that his loving-kindness is an unseen wall around us—ah, that is the sweetest thing in the world, the very marrow and fatness of the heavenly banquet is in that! To be able to say in your heart with a happy gladness, "God loves me, my life pleases him, I am making men happier, I am helping some to do better, the burden is a little lighter for some souls because of me"—that is the root of joy!

We cannot speak of this feast of service and the conscious joy of it without remembering how rich and blessed was the feast to our divine Lord. You remember how they left him one day, tired out, by the well, and the disciples went into the town of Samaria to get food, and while they were gone the

sinful woman came, and Christ won her heart away from her sins and brought the light of a new life to her soul, and when they came back with their provisions the Master did not wish anything to eat. As they wondered if somebody had given him a meal while they were gone, he said to them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

I press this feast upon you all the more gladly because it is within the reach of every one of you. Though you be as hard pressed as David, though you be as unjustly treated as was he, yet the hardships and trials and wrongs which you know at the present time need not shut you out from one single meal of the heavenly food. There is no home so poor but God will send his angels there to cater to the soul that lifts thought and affection in silent meditation and prayer toward his throne. No one is so weary or tired but that if he will give himself with unreserved affection to serve God and to be helpful to his fellow-men God will give him the rich marrow on which Jesus fed and was satisfied.

Do I speak to anyone who is passing through life without knowing anything of this heavenly food, this divine feasting of the soul? I would

not stop without inviting you to begin here and now. Christ himself compares the Gospel, with all its offers of forgiveness, its cleansing of the heart, and its hope of heaven, to a feast, and in his own language and by his authority I now invite any soul that is hungry and athirst for heaven's forgiveness and love to "Come, for all things are now ready!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE VULTURES WHICH STEAL HEAVEN OUT OF
THE HEART

And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.—*Genesis xv, 11.*

WHEREVER Abraham went, from youth to old age, he carried his credentials with him. Wherever he settled he built an altar to God and made his offering thereon. He is a stalwart and vivid personality standing out against all the mysterious background of the old patriarchal world. The picture suggested by our text is very simple and very suggestive. It is in a country place, far from towns, that Abraham makes his offering unto God. But the vultures abound, and his back is scarcely turned from the place of worship before these devouring birds, these scavengers of the air, attracted by the carcasses of the beasts and birds which he had slain, set upon his offering. There was only one thing to do, and that Abraham did. He set himself all day long to stand on guard and protect his sacrifice.

This scene is very suggestive. The altar and its

offering meant to the patriarch everything that was worshipful, reverent, and loving toward God. To drive away those foul birds and protect that sacrifice meant to keep alive his reverence, his religious earnestness, his fellowship with God, his close association with the heavenly world. It surely does no violation to Scripture to allow this scene to suggest to us the great truth that none of us can be freed while we remain in this world from the necessity of this watchfulness against the vultures which would steal heaven out of our hearts. Unless we are on the alert and are awake to the fact that there are spiritual enemies we shall soon be bankrupt of our richest treasures. A noble life is never had except at the price of this watchfulness, and unless we are careful we shall be constantly thrusting ourselves into situations which will despoil us of our Christian character.

A young backwoodsman who guided me on a trout-fishing excursion last summer was pointing out a certain lake where he said that the winter before he had gone fishing for pickerel through the ice, and, while he was catching the pickerel, suddenly the large lake trout began to bite, and in a few minutes he caught twenty-five pounds of them.

I quietly remarked, "Is it not against the law to catch trout through the ice?"

He looked at me whimsically, and said, "O yes; but then, I couldn't stop their biting."

I think there are a good many young people who excuse themselves for their sins in much the same way. They put themselves into positions where they are tempted to indulge in questionable things, and then say, "O, well, I couldn't have done differently, situated as I was." A man goes with drinking company, knowing that he will be tempted to strong drink, and then excuses himself for taking wine because of the circumstances in which he is placed. You cannot help temptation coming when you put yourself in the way of it, but you can keep away from the place where you have every reason to know that you will be tempted.

Great cities are especially beset by these scavengers who will rob us of our better selves unless we are alert in watching against them and driving them away. Tennyson has described the youth who travels toward London and sees the lights of the great city flaring in the sky, a beacon of hope or of despair, of victory or of failure. As has been well said, that magic light may be a will-o'-the-wisp, a dancing gleam of beauty and splendor over a fetid marsh of corruption and decay. But the fascination is always there. Hope and promise are written in larger letters than those that tell of danger

and peril. For young men and women there seems to be an invincible attraction toward the great city—"this evolution of the ages, this battle ground of the energies, this arena where men run, dropping sweat and blood, to fall and die or win the victor's crown." Everyone knows that in the city the boy too often loses his manhood and the innocent girl what is more than life to her; that thousands fester and decay morally and physically in the great swamps of poverty; that much of the atmosphere of the city is tainted with the breath of vile and criminal multitudes; but on they come, like a tide on some storm-driven main, filling the city with new life every year. And if these young men or women keep in the heart the reverence and worship, the hope and faith, learned at a Christian family fireside, it will be because they are alert and watchful to drive away the vultures which will flock down out of the city sky, ready to steal out of their hearts all heavenly aspirations. Let us look at some of these scavengers.

The first vulture that one needs to be warned against in the city is a vulture called *ambition for worldly success*. The city is above all a place of ambition, and too many make a god out of success. They are going to succeed—honestly, if they can, but succeed they must. When a man makes up his

mind to that the devil has a mortgage on him and it is only a question of time when he will foreclose it. The man who is not willing to fail rather than to be dishonest or soil his soul with the grime of sin is certain to lose all the heaven out of his heart as the days go on. There can be no greater peril, no greater certainty of ruin to all high and noble life, than to permit yourself to become so absorbed in worldly success that it takes all thought and attention away from spiritual things.

A man lay dying in Philadelphia, and his pastor, one of the leading ministers of the city, came and talked with him as the man shivered on the verge of life. The minister said to him, "I have noticed you for several years as you sat in your pew, and there was a degree of intellectual alertness in your face, and it seemed to me that you had more than most members of the congregation appropriated the truths of God as they were set forth."

"Alas!" said the dying man, "you were deceived. I took that time not to listen to your sermon, not to be impressed by the truth of God. I took it to consider my worldly business, to work out my plans and schemes for the business of the coming week; and now I lie here impoverished, beggared, my haggard soul going to meet God face to face, choked

with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bringing no fruit to perfection."

I fear that man was a type of a great many men and women who are so absorbed with their struggle for worldly success that it becomes a vulture which devours the life of the Spirit and the hope of heaven out of the heart.

Strife is a vulture which often steals the possibility of heaven out of the heart. Abraham was once threatened with trouble in connection with his nephew Lot. Trouble grew up between their herders. The pasture ground was not large enough for their great flocks. But Abraham was determined that no unseemly strife should be permitted to fret his soul and hinder his perfect communion with God. What were a few fat steers or goats more or less compared to the peace of his heart, the assurance that he had set the right example before the world and lived in such a way that men would not sneer when they said, "There goes the friend of God"! So Abraham said to Lot that the whole world was open to him for choice. Being the elder of the two and the more powerful, he had the right to the first choice. But Abraham's was a noble soul. He would leave no door open for envy or jealousy or strife of any sort. So he gave Lot the first choice. Lot, had he not had a mean streak in

him, would not have accepted it; but he gobbled it up as a hungry pig eats swill. He took the well-watered pastures that led toward Sodom and faced his camp that way, and a sad choice it was for him. Abraham turned his face toward the desert, but he went with a smile on his countenance and with infinite peace in his heart. Angels visited him in that desert and he found no place so drear but there was constantly before his vision "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

It is often true that the lack of peace in a home steals heaven out of the hearts of the people who dwell there. Sometimes both husband and wife lose the heavenly atmosphere for the lack of that forbearance and patience which God is so ready to bestow upon them and which would insure peace. Often it ruins not only the happiness of the father and the mother, but it blights the career of children as well. Strife in a home is a foretaste of hell, while a home full of peace and love is a good beginning of heaven.

Many times a business life is carried on in a spirit of strife which takes out of it all the possibilities of highest service. The Christian man who is at peace with his employees, or the workingman who is at peace with his employer, has a great op-

portunity to illustrate the Christian graces and to exercise a divine influence. Strife despoils the situation, and in the home and the business as well as in social life we need to be watchful and alert that the vulture of strife does not steal out of our hearts the most precious of gems.

Doubt and skepticism of the great truths of God's Word, permitted to nestle in the heart, will steal away the most valuable treasures of the soul. But, some one says, "How can I help it? Doubts come without my desire. What shall I do?" Do what Jesus says. Do the duty that is next to you. Do what you know is right, and his light will fall on your path.

A gentleman was camping in the Maine woods one summer. One day he reached the shore of a lake, expecting to find a party of friends with whom he was to go up the lake to their camp. When he reached the appointed place his friends were not there. He began to get indignant. Why had they gone? Why couldn't they wait for him? On the shore of the lake he found a canoe with paddles. Tacked to a tree was a bit of paper with these words, "Take canoe, and follow." He saw at once that there was no use for indignation or anger, and no use in asking questions. He got into the canoe and paddled away after them. When he

reached the camp he found that his friends had had a good reason for going ahead, and as he thought it over there came to him the words of Jesus to Peter when Peter wanted to know what would come to John and the Master said: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." So I say to you that whatever there may be that you do not understand in the Bible or in God's dealing with you in your own life, one thing is sure, it is safe to follow Jesus Christ. Here was the one pure, triumphant life. The men who have followed him have come out safely. Drive away your doubts, as Abraham drove away the vultures, and follow Christ. As you follow him, doing the duty at hand, sufficient light shall fall on your path to lead you home.

Procrastination is another vulture which steals heaven out of the heart. Men put aside the best things, like the king before whom Paul stood, until "a more convenient season." How many things we are laying by "until we have time." O my friend, do it now! Some one sings:

"When I have time, so many things I'll do
To make life happier and more fair
For those whose lives are crowded now with care;
I'll help to lift them from their low despair—
When I have time!

“When I have time the friend I love so well
 Shall know no more these weary, toiling days;
 I'll lead her feet in pleasant paths always,
 And cheer her heart with words of sweetest praise—
 When I have time!”

“When you have time the friend you hold so dear
 May be beyond the reach of all your sweet intent;
 May never know that you so kindly meant
 To fill her life with sweet content—
 When you had time!

“Now is the time! Ah, friend, no longer wait
 To scatter loving smiles and words of cheer
 To those around, whose lives are now so dear;
 They may not heed you in the coming year—
 Now is the time!”

Many are putting this confession of Christ as their Saviour and obtaining the pardon of their sins among the things they will do when they have time, as if this were not the greatest question and the most urgent that could possibly take up their time. “Now is the accepted time.” “To-day is the day of salvation.” Do not let this vulture of procrastination whom men have always known to be a thief steal heaven out of your heart and out of your future.

Self-indulgence is a black vulture and the most thieving of evil birds. The best and most brilliant of all our jewels attract his fancy.

A New York jeweler not long ago told the story of how, many years ago, when he was a salesman in Maiden Lane, a diamond worth three thousand dollars was missing. All search was vain. On the second day after its disappearance the young salesman was in the back shop alone when an uncanny "caw! caw!" greeted him. He went to the iron-barred window, looked out, and on the window sill of a tenement house not twenty feet away sat a huge crow or raven. An inspiration came to the clerk like a flash, and without his hat he rushed around the corner into the tenement, inquired to whom the raven belonged, and learned that it was the pet of the woman with whom he was speaking.

"What room does that bird stay in?" he asked.

She led the way, and when they entered the room the raven was on a dining table, pecking away at the contents of a work-basket. To the woman's great surprise he seized the basket and turned its contents out upon the table. There was the diamond. The window bars had been far enough apart for the bird to enter the shop and the brilliant jewel had fascinated its greedy eye.

The lust for self-indulgence is like that bird. It has an eye on the most brilliant and splendid things that belong to any man or woman, and unless it is driven away and kept out of the heart it will steal

heaven out of your soul. If you allow lust for impure things, or guilty love, or self-indulgence of any sort to nest in your imagination, so that you muse and meditate on things that would make you blush with shame if others knew, then you may be sure that you are in deadly peril; and unless you drive those foul birds out of your soul and supplant them with earnest thoughts and pure purposes they will steal away your honor, they will steal away your purity of heart, and you will be robbed of the most priceless diamonds which belong to your manhood or your womanhood.

But, some one will say, "I have tried to keep guard over my soul, and I have failed." If that is so you have failed because you tried in your own strength, and that is the wrong way. You may have the divine help, and you cannot get along without it.

Dr. Baedeker, an evangelist, who has been making the rounds of the Siberian prisons and preaching the Gospel to the prisoners, says that in 1891 he met a nobleman of fine presence and cultured manners. He asked him how he came to be there, and he replied that it was one act, the work of a moment; but he would soon be free. He would go and live a new life, and he would take care not to return. The good man told him that it would

take a stronger power than his own to keep him. He urged upon him that another power was necessary, without which he could have no sure deliverance from sin. But the nobleman thought he was able to keep himself. Six years later Dr. Baedeker, was again traveling in Siberia, and some hundreds of miles from the former place of meeting he found this same nobleman, again a prisoner.

"Why, how is it that you are now here?" he inquired. "You told me that when you were free you would begin to lead a new life. How has this happened?"

"It was the work of a moment," he said. "I was free but I could not walk straight."

That fallen nobleman had tried in his own strength and failed, and so men have always failed when they have refused the divine fellowship. I offer you the divine help in Jesus Christ. Ask aid of him, and he will not turn you away empty.

CHAPTER IX

THE SLEEPING DOG IN THE SINNER'S SOUL

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?—*2 Kings viii, 13.*

It is said that Mohammed once came in sight of Damascus and, looking on its picture of wondrous beauty, with a heavy sigh turned and went away and would not enter. When asked his reason he said, "It is given to man to have but one paradise, and I will wait for mine hereafter." In Damascus occurred the strange scene pictured by our text. Elisha had come to Damascus. He was at the height of his glory. He was the most powerful man in the kingdom, and men in other kingdoms who sought to do evil to Israel feared him more than they did kings or generals.

When the news came to the old king, Ben-hadad, in his palace, that Elisha had come to Damascus, it aroused him to action. The king was old and sick, and he greatly desired to know whether the illness that was then on him was to be his last. So he turned to his private secretary, Hazael, a young man who had served him faithfully for years and

to whom he had intrusted great power, and said to him: "Go and see Elisha, the man of God. Take him a splendid present. Load forty of the biggest camels in the royal stables with every good thing of Damascus, and go before the prophet and give him my compliments, and ask him to send me word whether this sickness is unto death or if I shall recover my strength again."

So Hazael fixed up his presents in the lavish oriental style and went on his visit to Elisha. As he stood before Elisha he said, "Thy son Benhadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?"

Elisha replied that he could tell his master that there was nothing in his disease that would necessarily carry him off, but that the Lord had made known to him, the prophet, that the king would surely die. And then Elisha gazed into the face of Hazael with a penetrating scrutiny, as though he would read him through and through. The young man was embarrassed and dropped his face, and when he did so Elisha burst into tears and sobbed like a child.

Hazael was now as astonished as he had been abashed a moment ago, and exclaimed, "Why weepeth my lord?"

As soon as Elisha could compose himself he said

that he was weeping because he perceived the horrid cruelty and the abominable deeds which Hazael would do to the people of Israel, and he went on to enumerate some of the vilest and most brutal things that could be done in the most barbaric age.

At this Hazael drew back excitedly, and I have no doubt but his horror was real as he exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do a thing like that?"

Then Elisha went on at length to tell him that he would be king of the country, and that after he had come into power he would grow into this monster which the prophet had pictured.

Elisha's prophecy came true. Hazael went home with his head in a whirl. All the dreamed-of ambitions and lusts that had been lying dormant in the man for years suddenly sprang into being. All night he plotted and brooded and wondered how he might hasten the coming of his absolute rule. Toward morning he hatched his devilish scheme. He knew that the old king was weak and that a very little thing would quench the faint spark of life which still animated him. So he went softly into the king's room. He sent the servant away on some pretext and took a cloth that had been used to bathe the king's brow—perhaps it was lying on his forehead when Hazael went in—and all he had to do

was to slip it down over his mouth and nostrils. The old man, weak and feeble, could not breathe. His hand raised convulsively to take away the obstruction, but the heavy covering on the couch was too strong for his weakness. There was a suppressed moan, a convulsive clutch of the hands, and in a few moments all was quiet. The old king was dead. Hazael already had the army in his hand. He took the empty throne, and he became the very monster that Elisha had prophesied.

Now, the lesson which I wish to emphasize is this: That, all unconsciously, the dogs of cruelty and lust and murder had been sleeping in Hazael for many years. He was honest, no doubt, when he drew back from Elisha and the picture he painted and cried, "Is thy servant a dog?" If Elisha had been speaking to him from our standpoint he would have said: "Ah, young man, I see the dogs you do not perceive. I look down into your heart. I look down into the mirror of your soul, and I see that in the secret imaginations and ambitions and desires of your heart it is a dog kennel. The dogs lie sleeping, some of them, but the dogs are there. During all the years that you have been cherishing evil thoughts and unholy ambitions the dogs have been growing for just such an hour as this, and I see now that the time is at hand when circum-

stances are going to take a hand and arouse and cut the leash of the dogs in the filthy kennel of your wicked heart. And they shall spring forth until you shall lie and murder and do all kinds of deeds of revolting wickedness."

Now it would not be worth our while to discuss this story if there was anything about it that was unique. The story is very old and Hazael has been a long time dead. But the lesson which it teaches is illustrated every day in this modern life. Men still walk and work about us who have in their hearts, hidden in the deepest recesses of their souls, sleeping dogs of which they are unconscious but which threaten all their future. Such a life can never be safe until that heart is transformed, until it ceases to be a dog kennel and comes to be a temple from which incense goes up to God from a grateful spirit.

When one undertakes to illustrate this thought he is only embarrassed by a wealth of incidents. In a Western city I formed a friendship a few years ago with a very strong and vital man. He is a man of great strength and force of character. He is one of the kind of men who bring things to pass. We were drawn together by certain traits in each other that always gave us pleasure in personal fellowship. My friend was not a Christian. He

liked to come and hear me preach; he delighted to eat dinner with me; but back into the chamber of his soul he rarely let me go at all. I was deeply interested in his salvation. For years I prayed for him; I often conversed with him; but he met me with a certain outward barrier of reserve. He would not let me into his heart, though on any subject except religion he was perfectly frank. He was a very successful business man and had wonderful resources of personal ability that were my constant admiration. About all such subjects he would talk to me with perfect frankness; but when I began to talk about the treasures of the soul and the coin of the higher realm he put up his shield in a moment and met me with raillery and jest.

On one occasion when we had been talking about the downfall of a man whom we had both known he seemed to be greatly stirred and his reserve broke down to some extent. He told me then that in his younger manhood he had at one time succumbed to the fascination of strong drink, that his friends were greatly alarmed about it, and that finally he himself had become frightened and made up his mind that there was only one path of safety and that was to stop drink altogether. This he did, and declared that for years he had not touched it and never intended to do so again.

I was more alarmed for him than ever when I knew this, and I urged upon him that the ground under his feet was not safe. With all the privilege of friendship I pleaded with him. I said to him: "There is only one thing that can make a man safe who has had your experience, and that is to give yourself up to do the will of God with all your heart. Become an earnest Christian; let Christ dwell in your heart; give yourself up to do good deeds for Christ's sake, and then your soul will be so possessed with a positive goodness that there will be no room for the evil to break in. But so long as you go on depending simply on the power of your will to keep you from doing wrong you are in danger. Those old appetites and lusts are by no means dead, they are only sleeping, and some day when you are overworked, some time when the market goes wrong with you, in some hour when your heart is heavy or when you are sick, the enemy will spring forth and assault you in your weakened condition, and you will be a more helpless prey than you have ever been."

I think he was truly moved by the argument; but, do my best, I was never able to rouse him to action. He had so much self-confidence, he had so much faith in his own power to master himself without the help of God or Christ or the Church,

that he would not and did not open his heart to welcome Christ as his Saviour.

It is only a few years ago that all this happened, and very recently his wife, whom he has loved with great devotion and who has been to him everything that a wife could be, came to me broken-hearted and distracted. Her husband had been caught, as I feared, in the net of the enemy. They had gone to a distant city to visit their only child, a daughter, who had married. This child came as near being the idol of her parents as it is possible for a child to be. While there, under an unusual pressure, this great, strong, self-willed, resourceful friend of mine had given way to the temptation of drink. Of course it was, like letting down the dam after a turbulent stream has for a long time been held back. It was like letting loose in the arena a wild beast that has been starved until it is frantic with hunger. He not only drank, but he drank hungrily, he drank recklessly, and with the touch of it his whole nature seemed to be transformed. He tempted his daughter to drink, and her husband, and within a few weeks the three of them drank to drunkenness again and again, until they were shamed and disgraced and humiliated before everybody who knew them. And my friend's wife said to me: "I am now in utter despair. The

two people who have been the great passion of my life, for either one of whom I would gladly have died, my husband and my child, have been degraded before my eyes. He, I think, will stand it but a little while, and she, I fear, will be utterly blighted in the beautiful career that I had hoped for her. What is there left in life for me? Surely I have been smitten indeed!"

Now I have been talking to you about one of the best men, as men go in worldly circles, that I have ever known, and I have told you the true story. What was the secret of it all? Is it not plain that during all these years the dog of drunkenness was kept in the kennel of his soul? Sometimes it slept. No doubt there were months, and possibly even years, when it never awakened. Sometimes it awakened and was hungry. It growled. It shook its chains. It pulled on them. It whined. It begged for drink. But the iron will of the man when he was at his best was, as yet, too much for the dog. There came a day, however, when his moral vitality was low. There came an hour when everything was propitious for evil. There came a time when he was morally weak and sensually strong. Then the dog aroused, hungry and vicious, and that iron will snapped under the strain, and the dog was at

his throat, the very dog he himself had kept chained in his kennel all these years.

Do not imagine for a moment that it is only certain kinds of sin, only special sorts of temptation, concerning which our theme is true. No, indeed! It is true of every sin. It is true of every wicked appetite, of every evil lust. No man is safe who permits sleeping passions of evil to remain alive in his soul. It is not enough simply to chain these evil passions. The only safety is in a heart cleansed of them, a soul illuminated by the presence of God's Spirit, a heart where Christ dwells and where good angels hold fellowship and communion. Paul said to the Galatians, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." So I say to you, open your heart to Christ, let him come in and dwell there, and there shall be no room in your heart for a dog kennel of evil passions and lusts. Surely that was what Jesus meant when he said to Nicodemus, who was a moral man as men of the world go, and an exemplary man, "Ye must be born again!" It is not enough to be negatively good. Christ wants the open confession, the positive committal, the aggressive service for righteousness, and that alone can put you into perfect safety as an armored soldier in the service of the Lord.

CHAPTER X

A MAN'S VALUE MULTIPLIED BY CONVERSION

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.—*Philemon* 10, 11.

THIS is one of the sweetest love letters in the Bible, or, indeed, in all literature. It is a love letter from one man to another. In some place, possibly at Ephesus, Paul had run across Philemon, and with his accustomed fidelity had brought about his conversion to Christ. They had become very warm personal friends. Slavery was in that day almost universal. Nearly all the heavy work of the world was done by slaves. Philemon had in his house a slave named Onesimus. He was a bad fellow, and finally ended a most unprofitable career, so far as his master was concerned, by running away. It was in the time when Rome was the center of the earth, and when Onesimus got to drifting around; always having a hunted feeling, he drifted down to Rome. There some divine providence brought him to Paul's attention. Perhaps his homesickness and loneliness, or, more

likely yet, his own hunger and poverty, drove him to Paul for help.

Now, Paul was one of the greatest soul-winners that has ever blessed this world. His own religion was so genuine, and there was so much cheerfulness and abounding joy about it, that it charmed nearly everybody who came into touch with him, and as Paul looked on this poor, hungry, runaway slave, about as hopeless and wretched a creature as any man ever looked on anywhere, his heart was filled with pity for him and he longed to win him to Christ and bring to light the buried manhood that was in him. As the miner rejoices to bring to the surface the hidden gold; as the searcher after diamonds delights to find the shining gems in the blue clay, so Christ and men who like Paul are possessed by the spirit of Christ delight in nothing so much as in seizing upon a man or a woman who has been trodden down in the mire and muck of sin until there is left no visible trace of the image of God, and through their love to cleanse and purify that lost jewel until, redeemed and glorified, it shines in the crown of God. Paul wanted all the more to save Onesimus because he was probably about the worst case he ever saw. I can hear the old white-haired hero as he chuckles to himself with holy glee: "What a victory that will be over the

devil! What a triumph for my divine Lord if I can take this poor fellow, this runaway slave, who has never been any good to anybody since he was born, and save him from his sins! I will build a fire of unselfish love in his soul and make a man of him! Ah, that will be glorious!"

So Paul set to work to win Onesimus to Christ, and he did it. The Christ in Paul was so apparent that as Paul talked with him and prayed with him and loved him this poor, despairing man whom nobody had ever loved found a great hunger in his soul to know the Saviour who had given to Paul such a glorious charm.

When he is converted Paul sends him back to Philemon, and he tells Philemon all about it. He tells Philemon how glad he is that he has been able to bring about the conversion of Onesimus, and that he now loves him so much that he thinks about him as his own son, and he begs Philemon to receive him with all the love and consideration he would if Paul had a son to send to him. He tells Philemon that he is well aware how good-for-nothing and unprofitable the fellow was in the past; but all that is changed now, for he has become a man, a man of honor and integrity, a man who is willing to take the backward track of his life and make it right to the very best of his ability, a

man worthy to be loved and honored by all true and noble souls.

It is on the matter of the multiplying of a man's value through his conversion to Christ that I want to ring the changes at this time. My message is that nothing increases any man's value so much as a genuine conversion to Christ, and this is true in every sense.

I knew in a certain city the manager and chief owner of a large manufacturing plant. Several hundred men were employed in it. They were men of rather a low type of intelligence, and their employer led a cat-and-dog life with them. It was a very unpopular firm among the working folk of the city where the huge business was and is carried on. Through that subtle freemasonry of laborers the word was passed around generally that they were hard taskmasters.

The manager came one summer evening, a few years ago, to the office of a friend, and said: "I'll tell you what is the fact—the very devil is in those men down at our shop. There's no use trying to do anything with them. They are vicious and mean-spirited and are always up to some deviltry that makes us expense, just out of pure ugliness."

"What's the matter now?" inquired the friend.

"Well," said the manufacturer, "the last thing

they have been up to is that during this spell of hot weather every time the foreman's back is turned they turn the water on and let it run everywhere, wasting hogsheads of water that the company has to pay for."

"Why did the men do that?" inquired the other, quietly.

"O, I suppose they wanted it a little cooler."

"Well, what did you do about it?"

"O, I fixed 'em this time. I fitted a cap over every one of the faucets and left only one place in the whole plant where water could be got."

When you take into consideration that there were from seven to eight hundred men employed there, doing the hottest sort of work, you can easily understand the uncomfortable position for the men and the mutual ill-will between the employer and his workmen.

The manufacturer's friend, to whom he had opened his heart, was a shrewd-headed Christian man, and invited the troubled employer to hear an address that evening by another business man who represented an establishment that had great success through the control of their plant on Christian principles.

The first manufacturer was a nominal Christian, but he felt that night as he listened that he had

never really been personally converted to Christ. He felt convicted of business and social sin, and there and then he repented and asked God to forgive him and to help him to lead a new life among his men.

The situation that confronted him was by no means an easy one, because of the lack of intelligence and moral worth among his employees. When he mentioned to his business associates his new purpose to seek to win the men's hearts by kindness, some of them said to him: "You are crazy. You can never get any appreciation of kindness or special interest out of the kind of cattle you deal with in your shops." But our friend's conversion was real, and he gave himself up to it with all the enthusiasm of his new-found love for Christ and his fellow-men. A little over a year after this new order of things began, at the invitation of the manager I visited his plant, and in that short time the profits of my friend's conversion had many practical results that could be summed up.

As the summer advanced ice-water tanks were placed at convenient places, so that there was no longer any temptation to waste the water in order to have it cool. Huge fans were put up in the rolling mill and fresh air was introduced from the

outside to play down on the men at work over the fires; and that summer for the first time in the history of the plant it ran through the entire season without needing to stop on account of the heat. Not only did it save in the health of the men, but the manager and his associates found that it was a good financial investment; for, while it cost only three hundred dollars to introduce and operate the fans, it was more than a thousand dollars in their pockets to avoid interruptions of other years caused by the men giving out on account of the heat.

A system of shower baths has been introduced, and each man has a locker of his own. So a foundryman comes to work in the morning in his ordinary street attire and before he goes to work he changes his clothes and dons his rough working suit for the day. In the evening he has the luxury of a free shower bath where he can cleanse himself. Then he puts on his ordinary clothes for the street and, thoroughly refreshed and clean, he is ready to meet his friends in the car or his family at the tea table when he arrives home. Or if he is a young fellow he faces his sweetheart on the street without a blush save that which love or bashfulness inspires. He does not go home a foundryman, black and tarnished, and afraid he will meet somebody he knows; but he goes home a gentleman, and

doubtless with a library book in his hand, for the company has arranged with the city library authorities to set up a branch library in the office of the firm. It started in with fifteen readers, and six weeks after it was introduced one hundred of these Bohemians and Poles were taking out books from this library. Many of the men, who never thought of reading anything before, take them and read on the cars going to and from their work.

A restaurant has been introduced with wonderful results. A pint of coffee, steaming hot, made of the very best coffee to be obtained in the market, is sold to the men for one cent, and good sandwiches for two cents. A large plate of corned beef and cabbage, or ribs of beef and mashed potatoes, is furnished for five or six cents, and a large section of pie for three cents. This restaurant promises at these prices to become entirely self-supporting. One result of this experiment furnishes a very suggestive lesson for social and temperance reformers. Before the restaurant was introduced from three hundred to four hundred men poured out at the noon hour into the neighboring liquor saloons for beer and other intoxicating drinks, and these saloons did a large business. But when the restaurant was put in with its hot coffee for a cent, all this stopped as if by magic; and be-

fore a week was out not more than two or three men left the plant at the noon hour for any or all purposes.

The change in the manager had been as marvelous as in the men. I could hardly believe that this was the same man who less than two years before had turned off the water from his workmen in hot weather because of the mutual ill-will that existed between them. Though so short a time had passed, he had won the complete confidence and loyalty of his workmen, and he said to me, with beaming and enthusiastic face, "I do not know whether I shall reach it or not, but my ideal is to have the men who work for me regard me as their best friend, and in time to take the place in their affections and confidence of the selfish demagogues who have been controlling them."

Now, surely, you will agree with me that the multiplication of value in that man was as marvelous as it was in the case of Onesimus, the runaway slave, who was made a man, and a good man, through conversion to Jesus.

There is one thing that I want to emphasize to every man and woman among you who is not a Christian, and that is that if you will give your heart to Christ he will make a great deal more out of you than you will ever be able to make out of

yourself. He will multiply your value. You will be worth more to yourself. You will be worth more to your friends. You will be worth more to the world for all time to come. You remember how Jesus took the little boy's basket of loaves and fishes and fed the multitude with them. So he is able to deal with you. See what he did for John Bunyan, the drunken tinker of that little town of Bedford, England! When his Christian wife by her devotion and love brought about Bunyan's conversion to Christ, Jesus multiplied that man's powers, gave him visions and helped him to write them down, until he has been the cause of leading thousands and tens of thousands out of the City of Destruction and on the beautiful pilgrimage toward heaven through all the years since that day. Give Christ your heart and God's plan of multiplication will begin this very hour. He will multiply your value as a husband or a wife, or as a son or a daughter, or as a father or a mother, or as a friend. It may be your influence has been positively bad to some who have been under your sway. Give your heart to Christ and he will change all that and make your influence positively good to all within your reach.

If you ask me how to come to Christ and make

sure of your conversion, I assure you it is the simplest thing in the world. You have been going wrong. Turn about and go right. You have been indifferent to Christ. You have been living without any reference as to whether your life was pleasing to him or not. Begin now to do what he asks of you. He says, "Confess me before men." Do it. Turn your eyes on Jesus. You have been thinking about him as the Saviour of the world. Make it personal. Remember that he is your Saviour, that he died for you, and that if you will turn to him he will forgive your sins and take away your hard, indifferent heart and give you a new heart that shall be sensitive to his will.

Henry Moorehouse, during his first visit to America on evangelistic work, was in one of our cities the guest of a cultivated and wealthy gentleman. This man had a daughter just advancing into womanhood and looking forward with bright anticipation to a gay and worldly life. One day she entered the library and found the evangelist poring over his Bible. Begging pardon for the intrusion, she was about to retire, when he looked up and said, in his quiet and tender way, "Are you saved?"

She could only reply, "No, Mr. Moorehouse, I am not."

Then came another question, "Would you like to be saved?"

She thought for a moment of all that is meant by salvation, and of all that is meant by the lack of salvation, and she frankly answered, "Yes, I wish I were a sincere Christian."

Then came the third question, asked very solemnly and earnestly, "Would you like to be saved now?"

Under this searching thrust her head dropped, and she began to look into her heart. On the one hand her youth, her brilliant prospects, her father's wealth and position in society, made the world peculiarly attractive; and on the other hand stood the Lord Jesus Christ, who must then and there be received or rejected. No wonder the struggle in her heart was severe. But as the realities of eternity swept before her vision she raised her eyes and calmly and resolutely said, "Yes, I want to be saved now."

The supreme moment in her history was reached, and the preacher was led by the Holy Spirit to guide her wisely.

He asked her to kneel beside him at the sofa and to read aloud the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. This she did in a tone that became tremulous and broken by sobs. "Read it again," said Henry

Moorehouse, gently, "and whenever you find 'we,' 'our,' and 'us,' put in 'I,' 'my,' and 'me.' Read it as if you were pouring out your own heart before God." The weeping girl read again: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and I hid as it were my face from him; he was despised, and I esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne my griefs, and carried my sorrows: yet I did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Here she broke down completely, as the thought of her personal relations to the Lord Jesus in his sufferings for the first time flashed into her mind. But, wiping away her blinding tears, she read on: "He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon him; and with his stripes I am healed. I like a sheep have gone astray; I have turned to my own way; and the Lord hath laid on him all my iniquities."

She was silent for a moment, and then exclaimed, with deep emotion, "O Mr. Moorehouse, is this true?"

"Dear child," he answered, "does not God say it?"

Again she was silent for a time, but at length looking up, no longer through the tears of bitter

grief, but in joy and adoring gratitude and inexpressible love, she said, "Then I am saved, for all mine iniquities have been laid on him, and no stroke remains for me." She rose from her knees with the peace of God that passeth all understanding filling her heart and soul.

Many years have passed since that day, and that young woman, whose conversion to Christ came so suddenly, has lived a life peculiarly blessed of God and full of profit and blessing to everyone she has known.

The same divine Lord bore your sins in his own body on the tree, and waits ready to receive and forgive you and to multiply all that you have of good, and to take from you everything that is wrong. Come to him, I pray you, without delay!

CHAPTER XI

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.—*Daniel* iv, 4, 5.

SHAKESPEARE makes one of his characters say, "Misery doth acquaint a man with strange bedfellows," and of all the miseries which give bedfellows to human beings which disturb their slumber and rob them of their peace sin is the worst.

This old king of Babylon was outwardly in a most flourishing condition. He was the greatest and most powerful ruler in the world. We hear much talk about world powers in these days, but in that day the king of Babylon was the one great world power. There was no city on earth like Babylon. There was no king whose armies were so great, who was so rich in wealth, or who lived in such dazzling splendor as this ruler of Babylon. And yet he could not sleep. The trouble was that he was a sinner against God, and his peculiar sin was what we in our day would call worldliness. In

his prosperity, in his power, he had forgotten God and gave him no reverence and no honor, but lived his own selfish life, thinking there was no one who could interfere with him.

One night he had a sudden awakening. He had a strange dream. He saw a tree, and it grew before his eyes until it became so high and strong that it reached up to the heavens, and look as far as he could on either side he could not see the end to which its branches reached forth. The tree was very beautiful, and the fruit was so plentiful that the whole world could eat from it. All the beasts of the fields came and stayed under its shadow, and all the birds of the air flocked to that tree and made their nests among its branches, and all men came and fed upon the fruit. And while he looked with wonder and admiration at all this some one came down from heaven and stood by the tree and shouted, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's

heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him."

And then the king awakened. He felt that this strange dream was meant as a warning to him. All his sins, all his follies, came up before him, and he was greatly troubled. There was no sleep for him that night. The next day he sought all the wise men and tried to find out what it meant; but he could learn nothing. At last he thought of Daniel and sent for him, and God gave Daniel the interpretation of the king's dream. He told him what it meant. He told him that that great tree which grew so high and strong and filled the earth, which became a nesting place for all the birds, a shadow for all wild beasts, and furnished food for men everywhere, was the king himself. It was a picture of his own greatness. And Daniel went on to tell him that the vision he had of the heavenly messenger who commanded that the tree should be cut down and destroyed, but its roots should be left in the earth, while his portion should be with the beasts of the fields till seven times pass over him, signified that the king himself should be driven from men, and his dwelling should be with the beasts of the fields, and that he should eat grass like oxen, and his punishment should last for seven years.

Now, we are assured that all this happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Grown beastly, and given over to self-indulgence, he finally lost his reason and went forth like an idiot, a wild man, to eat grass with the oxen, and his nails grew like birds' claws, and his body was covered with long hair like feathers.

The message which I bring is indicated not only in our text but in this story. Sin robs the soul of peace. A man may be flourishing ever so much. He may live in a house as fine as that belonging to the king of Babylon. He may have the most delicate food to eat, the choicest wines to drink, the softest raiment to wear, and every service that man may render to him, and still be doomed to a sleepless couch because of the mysterious bedfellows with which his sins will furnish him. Many a man commits his sin as though it were a little thing to do, and then goes on his way thinking it is all over with and that is the last of it. But there was never such a detective as sin; no man can outrun it; no man can escape from it; it follows him more faithfully than a hound follows his master, and when it will it howls in his ears and will not let him sleep.

You remember the story of Jacob, and how he sinned against his brother. He took advantage of

him and cheated him. For fear of his brother he fled away into a foreign land. He was gone for many years, and then he came back with great flocks and herds and his family which had grown up about him; and all was going pleasantly when suddenly a messenger came and told him that his brother was coming to meet him with a large company of soldiers, and then there flashed back upon him a memory of his sin against his brother. He remembers his meanness to him. He thought it was sharp at the time, but now it looks ugly enough, and he would gladly go back and make it right if he could. He cannot sleep. All peace is gone from his heart. Remember, my friend, you will meet your sin again. No man ever escapes from his sin by simply covering it up and trying to forget it. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" is a saying as true as it is ancient. A man who tries to cover his sins is filling his bed with bedfellows that are like serpents.

I read some time ago of a man who tried to steal a ride in an empty freight car. It was a box car that had been loaded with bananas and was going back empty. There was a little hay or straw on the floor of the car, and the poor fellow stretched himself down upon it and went to sleep. He thought

he had found something very nice, and would steal a long ride in perfect comfort. But he woke in the night, with the train going, and found he was locked up in the car with a nest of tarantulas, and the dangerous crawling things horrified him and drove him wild. He was locked in there for many hours and his hair turned white from fear. He had an experience so full of horror that it almost unbalanced his brain. There are men and women all around us who are getting ready to spend years just like that. They are filling the mind with memories that will sting like a tarantula or hiss like a serpent.

The sinner always carries his own worst enemy in his breast. There in his own heart does he carry the enemy who is able to poison his sleep. He may lie in a chamber by himself, with the door locked and bolted, and still he has bedfellows that will not let him sleep.

Perhaps some man sneers as he listens to this, and says: "That is all nonsense. I have always done as I pleased, paid no attention to God or the Bible or religion; I have done just as I wanted to do, and I have broken one law of the Decalogue after another, and there is not a man in town who can sleep better than I can. My head scarcely touches the pillow till I am asleep. Such a Gospel

as you preach is only made to frighten women and children." Ah, my friend, I am not trying to frighten anyone. But I am telling you the solemn truth of God's Word, and the solemn truth of human history as well, when I assure you that both the Bible and history bear out the declaration that "there is no peace to the wicked." You sleep now, but the day will come when you cannot sleep if you do not get rid of your sins. God does not need to pay at the end of the week, but at last he pays. No man can mock God; in the end he must reap his own sowing. Men imagine they can escape it, but they cannot. If we desire results in eternity to please us we must sow the right kind of seed to bring about such a harvest. A philosopher once said to his friend, "Which of the two would you rather be, Cræsus, the wealthiest but one of the worst men of his day, or Socrates, who was the poorest of the poor, but distinguished for many virtues?" The answer was that he would rather be Cræsus in this life and Socrates in the next! But that is impossible. And even if it were possible a man would lose by it. For here in this world sin will rob the soul of its peace. As has been often said, the devil has no happy old men. He has no peaceful old women. A youth given over to self-indulgence peoples the mind and heart with

memories that fill the bedroom of middle life and old age with dragons.

Edgar Allan Poe, in his greatest poem, "The Raven," tells how the night was sleepless and the heart was full of sorrow. And in the visions of that sleepless night there came into his chamber the incarnation of all those memories and fears and sins that disturbed his peace in the form of a huge black raven that took up its position on the bust of Pallas above his chamber door. At first he was inclined to smile at it and think it of no great importance, and then it was a thing to argue with and reason with, and finally it was a thing to plead with, but he found that whether he smiled or argued or implored it was the incarnation of evil that could not be thrust out or gotten rid of. He says:

"Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from
an unseen censer

Swung by seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted
floor.

'Wretch!' I cried, 'thy God hath lent thee—by these
angels he hath sent thee

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of
Lenore!

Quaff, oh, quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost
Lenore!'

Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'

“‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird
or devil!

Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee
here ashore,

Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land en-
chanted—

On this home by horror haunted—tell me truly, I im-
plore—

Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I
implore!’

Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’

“‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil—prophet still, if bird
or devil!

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we
both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant
Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name
Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore.’

Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’

“‘Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!’ I
shrieked, upstarting—

‘Get thee back into the tempest and the night’s Plutonian
shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul
hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my
door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form
from off my door!’

Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’

“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pàllid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow
on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on
the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!”

Are you preparing for yourself a future like that? This is the question that should force itself home on every heart.

If any hear that question with sadness, conscious of stinging memories that are already robbing them of peace, and who have sought in one way or another, but without avail, to escape from them and the sins that caused them, I want to point you again to the hope that is at your very heart’s door. You might travel over the whole earth, and change your circumstances and conditions a thousand times, and if you did not escape from your sin you would not find happiness and peace. The trouble is in yourself. Open your heart to Christ and find the forgiveness of your sins and you shall have peace.

A very rich woman who was the owner of a wealthy estate in Scotland fell ill, and she visited

the continent of Europe seeking for a cure of her maladies. She went to Baden-Baden and tried the waters there. Then she went to Carlsbad and tried those waters, and then on to Homburg, but got worse instead of better. At last, in despair, she said to a great physician, "What shall I do?" His reply was: "Medicine can do nothing for you. You have only one chance, and that is the waters of Pit Keathly, Scotland." "Is it possible?" she replied. "Why those waters are on my own estate!" She returned and drank at the fountain at her own gate, and in a few months she was completely recovered. So men go around the world and plunge into all manner of experiences trying to find peace for their hearts, when the secret is at their very doors. Repent of your sins, be forgiven through Jesus Christ, and you shall have the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER XII

THE FOOD FOR HEROES

Neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us.—*Numbers xiv, 9.*

MOSES had led Israel to the door of the promised land, and he tarried there with the great company of people while certain representatives chosen from each great family among them were sent ahead to spy out the land and come back and make report. They were able to do this without accident or misfortune. They found it a very fruitful and fertile land. They brought back clusters of grapes so large that it required two men to carry them on a staff between them. They brought also pomegranates and figs in abundance, and had great stories to tell of how they reveled in honey and milk. So far they were all agreed on the report. Ten of the men, however, while agreeing as to the fertility and desirability of the land, declared that it never could be captured by Moses because it was a land of giants, people so large that the spies declared they felt like grasshoppers when they saw them. This report spread dismay and terror among the people.

Every coward in the whole army took fright, and very soon there was a panic that nothing could stay.

Now, the other two spies were Caleb and Joshua, as brave men as the light of history has ever shone upon. They too had seen the giants, but they had not felt like grasshoppers in their presence. They were sure that God was with Israel, and that if they would go forward he would give the land into their possession as he had promised. It was during Caleb's vain attempt to quell the panic that was rising among the people that he uttered the striking language of the text. He urged them that they had no reason to fear the giants, for under God's help the giants would become but the bread on which they should feed. They would not listen to him and turned back into the wilderness. It is worthy of note that those cowards, who were so careful of their scalps and were so afraid that they would get killed, all had their coffins ordered before Caleb and Joshua, who were ready to face the giants. These two brave men were the only ones who entered the promised land forty years later. They were always ready to risk life for truth and God, and their very heroic fortitude was their protection.

Our theme is apparent. Difficulties and trials constitute the very bread on which heroic souls are

nourished. Great men and women have never been produced by self-indulgence, but rather by self-denial and self-sacrifice. The overcoming of difficulties, the feeding on them as on daily bread, is the secret of all great triumphs among men in every department of human life.

Paderewski, when told by her royal highness, Princess Victoria, that he was "surely inspired," answered: "Your royal highness will, I dare say, be surprised when I tell you that I remember the day when I was quite an indifferent player. I was determined, however, to be what the world calls a genius, and to be a genius I well knew that I must first be a drudge, for genius and drudgery always go hand in hand. Genius"—and Paderewski spoke excitedly—"is three quarters drudgery—that's what genius is. I at one time practiced day after day, year after year, till I became almost insensible to sound—became a machine, as it were. Now 'Paderewski is a genius,' says the world! Yes; but Paderewski, your royal highness, was a drudge before he was a genius!" Here is an illustration of our theme. If Paderewski had not bravely faced the giants of drudgery, and eaten them as a hungry man does bread, the world would never have been charmed by his music.

A recent writer says that necessity may be a

grim friend but it is a real one. To have vacillation ended and concentration, ingenuity, and determination forced into being is no small blessing. The development of our powers is the real point, and it thrives best under pressure. When Cortez would make a hero out of every man of his little army he burned up his ships, so that the dangers and difficulties were multiplied. There was only one alternative, victory or death. No man faltered after that. The Prince of Orange at a great battle where the Spaniards were on one side and the ocean on the other said to his soldiers, "Unless you eat the Spaniards you will have to drink the sea." To be forced to rely upon ourselves and to do and dare to the utmost creates moral muscle as well as physical muscle and is the best nourishment for heroic spirits.

The story is told of a stage driver in Montana, who on one winter's day had for his only passengers a mother and her baby. A sudden blizzard overtook them and the air became bitterly freezing. Every wrap the driver could possibly spare was given to the mother and her child. But though the babe was kept warm, struggle against it as she might, the fatal drowsiness which is the premonition of death by freezing began to seize and benumb the mother. An anxious glance into the

stage showed the driver what was wrong. While the mother hugged the babe to herself her head was swaying helplessly. The driver stopped the stage, opened its door, and taking the babe from the mother's arms wrapped it thickly in blankets and furs and placed it securely under the shelter of a seat. Then he pulled the mother out of the stage. The shock and the necessity of standing on the ground partially awakened her. Then he slammed to the door, sprang to his seat, whipped up his horses, and left the woman standing there. This brought her to her senses. At once she began to run after the stage, screaming, "My baby! My baby! O, my baby!" Forced into this rude exercise, her blood began to flow swiftly and warmly; the death sleep was banished. As soon as he dared the driver stopped the stage, assisted the now thoroughly aroused and warmed woman into it, and putting the babe back into her arms and wrapping both as protectingly as possible drove them to safety. If that woman had not been compelled to eat the bread of hard and terrifying exertion she would have died. And so in a higher sense it is often true that the only way to save us from the more deadly sleep of self-indulgence is to force us into exertion and battle with difficulty and hardship.

There was a belief in olden times that when a man slew an enemy the strength of that foe thus vanquished was added to the strength of the victor. That is always true in a moral combat. The hard struggles that put us to our wits' end, that demand that we shall deny ourselves personal comfort and luxury and self-indulgence in order that we may do some work that is worth doing or help on some cause that makes for righteousness—this is the food that nourishes real life in us, and no man eats such bread without getting stronger.

There is always that about every one of us which makes us want to get along as easily as we can in the world. If that element gets the victory it means stagnation. There is no progress when that desire masters in any human life. The proper thing for us is to wish to do the best thing that can be done by us, and when we set out to do that we often find that there is no easy way to do the best. It is a hard path, but it is the only path that will give us peace, the only one that will give us satisfaction in the end. Many people in the church wonder why it is that their Christian life is so tasteless compared to the radiant and happy experiences enjoyed by some others. The reason is very clear. They are trying to get along in their Christian life by the easiest path. They give as little

as they can and do as little as they can in order to feel at all respectable in the church. They let their religion discommode them in their self-indulgences just as little as possible. Jesus Christ said, "Take up your cross and follow me," "Deny yourself;" but there are many Christian people who, if they were to try to find what it was they were denying themselves of for Christ, would find it very hard work to discover it. They live just exactly as they would live if they were not in the church. The only difference, if any, is that they go to church when they feel like it. Their religion does not anywhere tug at the heart and soul and nerve of life. They remind me of rummage sales. It is quite popular now to gather up all the old odds and ends of clothes and the things we never expect to use again, and turn them to some account at a public sale. And there are many people who deal with God that way. They give God the waste shreds of their lives, the stray bits of time, and the almost worthless fragments of opportunity. When the call comes for service we begin to cast about for the things which we may give at least sacrifice, instead of saying, "Here, Father, is the very best I have. Take it, and use it, and use me as seemeth best to thee." There are some who read whose Christian life is far from satisfactory because it has been

made too easy. Pray God to give you hard things to do for his sake. Put yourselves to self-sacrifice and devotion in service and you will find that that is the food which will fill your religious life with romance and heroism.

Our theme has a great and important message for those who are not Christians. The enemy of souls is always seeking to hold men back from accepting Christ and the Christian life by making them believe that it is a hard way and a rugged road, while at the same time assuring them that the way of sin is an easy and a pleasant path. He says nothing to them about the thorns that are in the path of the transgressor. He says nothing to them about the thieves who wait beside the road that leads downward to the pit, but much of the giants who dwell in the promised land. Now there is a sense in which it is easier to be a sinner than it is to be good. All wicked passions and appetites and lusts which cry out for indulgence make it easy to yield to sin, but there is a dagger behind every such yielding. The whole path of sin is ambushed with enemies, and pain and remorse and dread and terror are all along the way. On the other hand, the path of righteousness is a path of self-respect, a path of honor, a path of peace even in the midst of struggle. While it may be hard to dash the cup

of sinful pleasure aside and start upon the rugged road of truth and right living, yet every step means a stronger manhood or a nobler womanhood. And the giants in the way, in the language of Caleb, will be the very bread on which you shall feed as one by one you overcome them and destroy them.

Perhaps even now some young soul stands at the crossroads. You are tempted to give way to sin and wrong doing. The temptation is very real and very fascinating. Perhaps the sin is mixed up with something that is noble and good in you. Satan thus transforms himself sometimes into an angel of light. But you may always tell him in one way for the devil that he is, and that is when the thing he wants you to do is something which the Bible and your conscience say is wrong. Angels of light, who are true angels, never urge people to do wrong. But this terrible temptation is upon you, and you look down that path, and your feet want to go that way. If you yield to your personal preference you will go, and yet you feel that to do so is to surrender yourself to evil and sell your immortal soul.

On the other hand, there is a road that leads upward toward a true and pure career. But it seems hard; it means so much self-denial; it means the very crucifixion of appetites that seem so vital and

alive in you that you find it hard to bring yourself to enter upon it and to turn away from the other. O, I pray God that I may have the right word to say to you as you stand there where the roads divide. Let me assure you that on that road of sin it is only the first steps which are pleasant; afterward there are the bondage of wicked habit and the goadings of a wounded conscience. But on the other road of goodness the first steps are the hardest, for every giant of difficulty you slay becomes your food, his strength becomes your strength, and you go forward growing stronger day by day and always with a conscience void of offense toward God and man.

I call you to this high and noble life. It is the best life any man or woman ever lived. It will give full play for all your powers and will give rewards beyond your highest dreams.

CHAPTER XIII

A GIRL'S SONG AND A KING'S JAVELIN

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it.—*1 Samuel xviii, 10, 11.*

To get at the point of that javelin we must look at yesterday, when the army of Saul, returning victorious from the triumph over the Philistines, which had been won first of all because of David's chivalric fight with Goliath, was hailed with acclamations and songs by the people. This was quite characteristic of the manners of oriental lands. In that part of the world it is the custom of the people in that manner to hail the arrival of any friend who has been absent for a long time, and especially to honor the return of a victorious army. Practically all the inhabitants issue from the towns and villages through which the returning host is expected to pass, in order to form a triumphal procession to celebrate their valor. In these processions the women and children naturally

form the majority, and the young girls praise the heroes with songs in honor of their brave and courageous deeds. Usually some local poet will write a ballad calling special attention to the particular heroes of the campaign, and these names will be sung and cheered by the populace as the soldiers pass by.

On the occasion connected with our text the people had assembled along the roads in great multitudes to welcome Saul and his victorious hosts. Some poet in the neighborhood, who had been specially inspired with admiration for David, had picked him out as the hero of his poem, and with more frankness than wisdom had put Saul and David in contrast, very much to Saul's disadvantage. The song had pleased the girls, and so, set to some popular tune of the time, they sang it again and again as the soldiers marched by. No doubt the soldiers were astonished, even though they cheered, as they heard those sweet-voiced Hebrew girls singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Now, as a matter of fact, this was true, for David in killing Goliath was really the cause of the entire victory which the army of Saul had won. But this by no means sugar-coated the pill for Saul, and as the proud king rode by and heard the girls singing a song

which gave David ten times as much praise as himself he was mad clear through.

How often a brilliant young man, especially if he be a public hero, finds his worst enemies to be among his friends. Voltaire once said, "If God will take care of my friends I will charge myself with my enemies." Certain it is that from the young and brilliant David down to our own genial and daring Hobson the greatest danger to the hero has come from his friends, from the people who admire him and wish to do him honor.

From the day Saul heard that song the record says he "eyed David." That is, he looked on David with suspicion and jealousy. If Saul had been a broad-minded man he would have considered that any victory on the part of his officers or soldiers which helped to strengthen the nation and to break down the power of its enemies was in the truest sense an honor to the king. But Saul was jealous of all the credit for victory, the credit which by no means belonged to him. True, Saul may have felt that giving David ten to one was more than he deserved, but he did the worst thing possible for himself when he allowed jealousy to make its home in his heart because for the moment another was the popular hero. One of the commonest sources of sorrow and misery is the un-

happiness that comes to people because they think they do not get their proper share of credit for the work they do. We have had a long wrangle which has entered State legislatures and the national Congress and been debated in the newspapers and discussed everywhere as to who should have the most credit for a certain naval victory in the Spanish-American War. Now there was glory enough in that victory for everybody connected with it, but the quarrel over who should have the most credit sent one of the men interested into an untimely grave and has embittered the life of the other. Edward Everett Hale is right when he says that the true secret of peace is to do your very best to help the world onward, and then never care who gets the credit for it. If Saul had followed that standard how different would have been his career!

This story suggests to us the deadly character of the sin of jealousy. The Bible is full of such suggestions. It was jealousy that fired the heart of Cain with malice and hatred. He saw that his brother Abel's sacrifice was accepted while his own was rejected. Immediately jealousy made its home in his heart. His countenance fell, his face got long and gloomy. God warned him of his danger and called his attention to the fact that Abel

had nothing whatever to do with the rejection of his sacrifice, and assured him that if he turned over a new leaf and did right he also would be approved. But jealousy still lurked in Cain's heart, and it grew until Cain could no longer restrain himself, for Solomon says, "Jealousy is the rage of a man." So when the rage got too much for him Cain went and killed his brother.

It was jealousy that seized the heart of Miriam, the sister of Moses. Miriam was a bright and a good woman. She was a woman of strong mind, a beautiful singer, and had many good qualities. But she was older than Moses, and from the time she had watched over him when he lay in his little ark of bulrushes among the reeds on the edge of the river Nile until he was the chief lawgiver of mankind she had always been the first woman with him. As the years went on she had been perfectly satisfied to have more influence over Moses than anybody else, and then, just as she was rejoicing in her supremacy, never dreaming that she was in any danger of losing it, Moses married a black woman from Ethiopia. Miriam was not only disgusted with Moses, but she let jealousy nestle in her heart and brood there until its wild rage drove her into sin, a sin which caused the punishment of God to fall upon her, and she went out from the camp a

leper. Many another woman who has not shown the leprosy on her face and hands has had a leprous heart produced by allowing jealousy to live there in her secret imaginations.

It was jealousy that made the elder brother in the story of the prodigal son so black with anger when he came home at night and found his brother had come back and that the father had made a feast with which to welcome him. It was his jealousy that threw gloom over the happy occasion.

So it was jealousy that hastened on the downward career of Saul. He eyed David. His eyes burned with jealous fire whenever they saw David, and so jealousy grew in his heart. All night he could not sleep. The more he pondered on it, and the more he let his jealous rage have its way, the more it seemed as though David was to blame for something. The applause of the people came to look in Saul's eyes like a personal insult offered the king by David himself. Now, David was entirely innocent. He had not a thought that was disloyal to Saul. He had not done one thing that should have evoked anything but love and confidence from Saul. But because the people gave him more credit than they did Saul, and a few bright-eyed girls had sung a song that stirred Saul's wrath, jealousy was given a free rein.

By the next morning Saul was in a bad plight. His state of mind was such that his servants sent out for David to come in and play for him on his harp. Saul was fond of music, and David was the most famous harper of his time. On previous occasions David had been able to arouse the king from these gloomy moods. But now while David played Saul's jealous fire raged in his heart. He eyed David while he played. David might as well have made music to a deaf man as to have played to Saul that morning. Suddenly the jealous rage became uncontrollable. Saul sprang to his feet and cried, "I'll pin thee to the wall with this javelin!" and hurled the javelin point-blank at the startled youth. But David was young and nimble, and he dodged the javelin and escaped.

And then the record says a wonderful thing—that after that Saul was afraid of David. What a strange way of putting it that is! One can understand why David might be afraid of Saul, for Saul was a king with an army at his back. But why should the king fear the youthful David? Joseph Parker says that it is the mystery of spiritual character. There was something about David which Saul could not comprehend. Not his physical power, not his social descent, not his musical genius, but the fact that there was again and

again a look in the young face which haunted the king in his dreams, reproved him in the midst of his vices, and rebuked him for all his falling away from God. As Judas was afraid of Christ in the garden and fell back to the ground before him, so every king evil-disposed like Saul, or every ruffian band, or murderer like Iscariot, will fall back from the truly righteous and noble character. David exerted no conscious influence; it was no purpose of his to affright King Saul; he attended to his daily business, cultivated communion with God, walked in the ways of goodness, and his quietly and simply doing these things invested him with that weird power before which the kingly heart quailed.

There is a beautiful example in David's conduct at that time. David and the king were alone together. The king missed him with his javelin. It was David's turn. No one can doubt that, young and agile as he was, the youth who had slain Goliath of Gath could easily have killed the undefended Saul. But neither then nor afterward would he touch him. Again and again he spared him. He was the Lord's anointed, and David would not touch his life. He would not give back javelin for javelin. There is a good suggestion in that for us. If men throw their javelins at us, and

criticise us, and say unjust and cruel things about us, let us leave their javelins lying at their feet and go our way. Life is too short and time is too sacred to waste it in hurling javelins of revenge. It is not for us to return evil for evil. It is rather for us to give good for evil. After this day David went back again when Saul pretended repentance, and took his harp with him, and made sweet music as of yore in the ears of his enemy. And yet again Saul hurled the javelin at him, but David would not pick it up. He kept to his harp, and went forth with his hands clean. Long before Paul wrote David was living what Paul crystallized into a great rule of life in the letter to the Romans: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

CHAPTER XIV

IS LIFE WORTH THE CANDLE?

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.—*Ecclesiastes* ii, 11.

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.—*2 Timothy* iv, 6-8.

IN these two passages we have the testimony of experts on human life. It would be hard to select out of the famous and brilliant characters that have adorned human history and helped to make history two men so well equipped to give evidence about life, its gain and its loss, its value or its lack of value, than Solomon and Paul.

Each of these men judges human life from the standpoint of his own experience in it, and they differ as much as it would be possible for men to differ in their judgment of its value. One man declares that he hates life, and that all is vanity and

vexation of spirit; that in human life a wise man is no better than a fool; and that everything changes to ashes. While the other man declares, after a long life, when he is nearing the end, that the fight of life has been good, the race full of interest, and the voyage, though stormy, enjoyable, and that he has kept, till his head is gray with age, the hope and faith with which he started out in young manhood.

Now, from the wide divergence of this testimony we are brought face to face with this fact, that life is worth living to some people and is without profit to others. Solomon and his class find life deceptive; it is full of vanity and vexation of spirit. Paul and all the people like him find life spicy and interesting, full of reasons for thanksgiving, ever increasing in hopefulness and enthusiasm, and face the sunset with the buoyancy of heart known only to those who believe that it is also the sunrise of immortality. Surely it is worth our while to study these two attitudes which make all the difference between success and failure in human life.

King Solomon represents that vast class of men and women who expect to find life valuable because of what they can get out of it. To them life is a gold mine where they are to constantly dig out the precious treasures. To them life is a store-

house from which they are to receive all precious things. They expect to find happiness and peace of soul by getting. Solomon tried it on the most dignified and glorious scale.

First of all, he was a very brilliant man. God had given him great wisdom, so that none of his ancestors and none of the men who came after him were as wise as he. Now, Solomon considered his conditions and made up his mind that he would get out of his wisdom all the joy there was in it. He gave his whole heart and soul up to search out wisdom. He proposed to know more than any man ever had about the world in which he lived. He thought that in that way he would get peace and have great joy of soul. He says: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom." And yet, to Solomon's great astonishment, he found that after a little the eye failed to get joy out of seeing, and the ear became palled from much hearing. He says: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And so this great, splendid king, the wisest man of his day, though the world was full of the fame of his knowl-

edge, came back from it all with the bitter cry: "I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." That search of Solomon after peace through wisdom and knowledge should stand out forever as a warning of the fact that the mere gathering of wisdom in order that a man may be wise for the gratification of his own selfishness will never give peace to a human soul. It never has and it never will, and every man who has tried it from the purely selfish standpoint of his own gratification has agreed with Solomon that the result was "vexation of spirit."

Then Solomon tried another experiment. He decided that he would give himself up to pleasure. He would no longer devote himself to the deep things of knowledge, but he would seek the pleasure of the senses. His eye should see beautiful sights; his ear should hear beautiful sounds; he should know all the sweet and soft caresses of love; everything that vast power, that unlimited wealth, and that his great wisdom could compass to make every drop of blood in his veins tingle with life and make every sensitive nerve quiver with delicate delight should be brought together. With this in view he gathered rare wines from the ends of the

earth, and gathered the most beautiful women from the palaces of the world to grace his banquets and give zest to his revelry. He built great public works; he erected beautiful palaces, and planted vineyards. He laid out gardens and orchards, and from the ends of the earth rare shrubs and trees were brought, yielding every variety of flower and of fruit. He built great reservoirs to hold the water to irrigate his gardens and his orchards. He had an army of servants to wait upon him and minister to his comfort. He had great summer palaces, and wide-stretching fields, and far-reaching pastures filled with flocks of cattle and herds of sheep. He gathered together the greatest collection of silver vessels and gold vessels and rich treasure that had ever been seen in the world. He was a lover of music, was Solomon, and his court became the musical center of the world of his time. Men singers and women singers from every land were attracted to it, and all the musical instruments known among the tribes of men were gathered together in the great orchestras that made music for Solomon. And he says about it himself, "So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my

heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor." And then he gives his final summing up of what all this great search meant to him, this vast struggle for pleasure, and this is what he says: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Solomon, though he was a king, though he had vast power, though he had unlimited wealth, though he had the applause of the world, though he was the most brilliant man of his age, found life not worth the candle, and the reason was because he expected to find happiness and peace simply through getting. His whole theory of life was to get. He was to get money. He was to gather wisdom. He was to collect gold and silver vessels. Musicians were to play to him. Servants were to wait on him. Trees were to bloom and bear their fruit for him. And he was to be a great kingly sponge that was to absorb the beauty and the fragrance and the glory of the world. Well, he had his chance, and he sucked himself full, and said when he was done, "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Evidently life is not worth living to a man who simply lives to get.

Now let us take the other tack. Paul also was a brilliant man. The most sneering infidel has never denied Paul brains. The biggest brain of his day was in the head that fell on Nero's block in Rome as a martyr for Christ. But before that occurred Paul was an old man, and for many years he lighted up towns and cities and continents with the fire of his great soul and the glory of his witness to Jesus Christ. Paul lived a very different life from that of Solomon. From the day on the road to Damascus when he had that wonderful vision of Jesus and heard Christ say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," and Paul, answering, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he had carried his life in his hand every day. He knew he would never die in his bed. I suppose in his younger manhood he had expected an early martyrdom. He had never hoped that he would be permitted to bear testimony to his divine Lord for so long a time. His life was full of constant excitement and interest. He went from one land to another preaching the Gospel. He met with much abuse and obloquy and shame. He was often mobbed. Again and again he was stoned in the

street and in the public square until he was carried away for dead. He was often imprisoned and put in the dungeon. His back was scarred with many a stroke from the public whipping-lash. At Ephesus they made him fight with beasts like a gladiator. He was shipwrecked. Almost every possible indignity and hardship that could come to a man had come to him. At the time he wrote these words which I have selected as his testimony to stand over against that of Solomon he was probably in Nero's dungeon in Rome. I well remember one warm summer day in Rome when I went down into that dark underground pit where it is believed Paul was imprisoned and where he wrote these words. It was a cold, damp place, and I thought, as I shivered, of what Paul said in the closing of his letter to Timothy, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee." When Paul wrote these words to Timothy he knew that his time on earth was very short. He had no doubt about the death he was to die. He says: "I am ready to be offered." And yet, having lived a life without the ministry of money or of luxury or of worldly comfort, having known much of sorrow and hardship and pain, being at the very moment in a dungeon and looking forward to being beheaded, Paul reviews his life and declares it to

have been a great success. How splendid his words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Now, what has made such a difference between the life of Paul and that of Solomon? How does it come that in spite of all the adversities of life Paul is not vexed with it, but delighted? The answer is very simple and plain. Paul has looked upon life not as a place for getting, but as a place for giving. He has not spent his life in seeking for men to minister to him and to bless him, but he has spent his life ministering to others and bringing blessings to his fellow-men. Throughout his whole life, since in his youth he gave his heart to Christ, he has never come in touch with man or woman but he has done them good. In prison or out, to every man who came near him he has imparted the good news about Jesus and brought to him the benediction of heaven. Like his Master he has not been ministered to, but he has ministered to everyone within his reach. The result is that he looks back over his life and finds that though it has been a fight, it has been a good fight, and though he has had the blow and the abuse and the cross to

bear, his heart has been full of joy; and his eye glows as he sees the crown of righteousness with which his Lord will reward him in heaven. Paul found life worth the candle. He had accepted it as a precious trust, and he had rejoiced in it, and came to take his departure from the world with supreme courage and joy, going as a great victor.

It only remains for us to ask which one of these great examples we are following. Follow Solomon and live your life on the principle of getting, indifferent to the claims of God, careless of the claims of your fellow-men, seeking only for your own gratification, whether it be for education, or for power, or for wealth, or for sensual pleasure, and you will come to Solomon's end. You may laugh now and say, as people sometimes do, "I care nothing for religion, I live just to have a good time, and yet I am as happy as the day is long." That is all very well for the moment, but the day will come—and it will come infinitely sooner than you expect—when you will sing a different song. Any one of a dozen things that might happen at any moment, and which are entirely beyond your power to prevent, would still all the laughter on your lips and take all the hope out of your heart and all the lightness out of your step. Hear my warning—nay, not my warning, but God's warning, that there

is no peace to the soul which gives itself to selfish gratification and refuses obedience to God.

On the other hand, if we will follow Paul's example, and as the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us as our Saviour lift our eyes to him with reverence and say, as Paul did, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and follow on with obedience in the footsteps of Jesus, doing God's will, seeking to bless our fellow-men in the name of our Lord, whether we be rich or poor, whether life be soft with blessed things or hard with severe trials, there shall be an inner peace, there shall be a soul joy, there shall be a hope and a faith so triumphant that, like Paul, we shall call it a good fight and a glorious victory.

CHAPTER XV

THE ONE ALTOGETHER LOVELY PERSONALITY

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.—*Isaiah* lii, 7.

He is altogether lovely.—*Solomon's Song* v, 16.

THIS first passage had, no doubt, direct reference to those who brought the news of the decision of King Cyrus to release the captive Jews who had been held prisoners in Babylon—those homesick souls who had hung their harps upon the willows by the river because their grief was too bitter for melody. The mountain paths were watched for messengers who should bring the good news of the return of these loved exiles.

How anxiously in those days, before railroads or newspapers or telegraph, when news must be transmitted by foot messengers or by men on horseback or camel, would the runner be watched for! If the messenger brought bad news he would be associated with sorrow and gloom in the minds of the watchers.

Once David was watching at Mahanaim for the

fate of the battle against Absalom. The old king watched anxiously as he sat between the gates, and the watchman from the roof over his head saw a man running alone, and cried and told David. David answered, "If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth." A little later the watchman saw another man running, and called out, "Behold another man running alone." And David said, "He also bringeth tidings."

And as the first man drew nearer the watchman called and said, "The running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings." When the runner came near enough he shouted, "All is well!" and fell upon his face. Then David's first question was, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" It was the father showing out above the king. And Ahimaaz parried the question. Then the second runner, Cush, came near enough to shout his news, and cried aloud, "Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." And again David asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" But Cush was made of sterner metal than Ahimaaz, and he replied, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that

young man is." And then David went up broken-hearted to that chamber over the gate, and cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

David was perhaps never able to look at those messengers again without a shudder. But how different the fate of those who brought the good news of the return of the captives to Jerusalem! No one would ever see them without gratitude, and none would seem so beautiful to the fond populace as those swift runners who bore the good tidings over the mountains.

Paul uses this figure to describe those who bring the glad tidings of peace and salvation from God in the Gospel. In his letter to the Romans he says: "How shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

While it may be properly applied to all ministers or laymen who carry the message of divine love to anxious hearts, it surely has its supreme application to that one perfectly lovely character, our Redeemer and Lord, "who was rich, and yet for our sakes became poor." Here, then, is our theme: The beautiful Christ coming as the bearer of good

tidings over all the mountains that are in the way to our sad and lonely world. It is a world that sorely needs good news and good cheer.

Christ comes over the mountains of *our sin*. It is a sinful world. The consciousness of sin is among all people. Men have made long pilgrimages and have worn out their lives trying to find freedom from sin. Mothers have cast their children into the Ganges hoping to make an offering for sin. But Christ is the only one who has come with the good news that every poor sinner in the world may freely have complete forgiveness and cleansing. How beautiful upon the mountains of our sin is the Christ who comes saying to us, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How beautiful is the Christ who says in his very last words to men, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is messages like this that come to us only through Jesus Christ. And we are able to come in his name and say to every poor sinner in the words of hope that Isaiah caught as he looked forward to the day of Christ's coming, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

It is a *tired world*. The multitudes of men are weary and overworked in body and in mind. How beautiful the Christ who comes over the mountains of our weariness with the sweet offer of rest! Hear his gracious words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The workingmen of the world never had such a friend as Jesus Christ. Christ has filled the world with hope. His name has more power to-day in obtaining justice and mercy for tired and overworked men and women, a thousandfold more power, than any other name in the world. Christ understood that this was to be his mission. The text of his first sermon was one of the prophecies about himself which says: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Christ comes over the mountain of our sorrow and our trouble. It is *a sorrowful world*. The tears are flowing in every land. Even behind smiling faces many a heart is aching. The world is full of sadness, but the beautiful Christ comes over the mountains of our sorrow and trouble to bring good tidings of heavenly comfort. If we could gather together all the worry and sorrow and trouble in this congregation what a mountain it would make! There are financial worries, not only of those who are threatened with great losses, but of those who find themselves unable to meet the requirements of those who are near and dear to them—the men who cannot do for their wives or their children what their love prompts, work hard as they may; the sad misunderstandings that come sometimes when the last effort has been put forth. God only knows how much of sorrow and worry and trouble comes from just such sources.

Then there is the worry about health. Few of us are entirely well. Most of us are patching up the body against coming disaster. Some have had their death warrant and know they cannot live

long. Some are harassed and perplexed by illness they do not understand.

Then there is the sadder trouble about loved ones; their health, or their morals; what a fruitful source of sorrow to a loving father or a loving mother or friend.

Then there is the deep heart-loneliness that some souls know, which is perhaps one of the bitterest sorrows in the world. Father and mother and near relatives are gone, and the man or the woman stands alone feeling that in the great world full of people he or she is all alone. People surrounded by relatives and who make friends easily cannot understand what it means to be in a great city full of people and feel that whether one lives or dies no one cares. Such loneliness is heartbreaking.

Now, all these sorrows are real sorrows, and no doubt every one of them is represented here. I want to point you to the beautiful Christ who comes over the mountains of sorrow and offers comfort and sympathy and divine tenderness in the midst of just such trouble as yours. Do you ask, "What does he know about financial worry?" Why, my brother, it was he who said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Do you ask, "What does he know about failing

health or approaching death?" Do you forget that Christ knew he was walking straight to the cross and that he was to die a shameful and awful death, and yet went toward it with a sweet and gentle face and a strong heart, that he might obtain salvation for you?

Do you ask, "What does he know about sorrow for loved ones?" Do you suppose he did not sorrow over Judas, or Peter? Surely never heart was wrung like the heart of Jesus for those on whom he had poured out the wealth of his love.

Do you ask, "What can he know about the loneliness I suffer?" How can you ask that, when you remember that when he was arrested the disciples all forsook him and fled, and he bore the agony and the insult all alone? Under the weight of that great burden he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O, if there be anybody in the vast universe of God that can sympathize with a lonely soul it is Jesus Christ! And he is able to come to you in any sorrow and give you comfort. Even good old Job, bereft of his children, stripped of his property, forsaken by his wife, and afflicted with a horrible disease, declares that God gave him "songs in the night." Open your heart to the beautiful Christ!

Christ comes over the *mountain of death*. It is

a dying world. Our little ones die, but Jesus comes, saying, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father." Our friends, our noble youth, our heroic workers, our holy saints die at our side, but Jesus comes over the mountain, saying to us, "If a man believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

"Once they were mourners here below,
And poured out cries and tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.

"I ask them whence their victory came:
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death.

"They marked the footsteps that he trod;
His zeal inspired their breast;
And, following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest."

We face the certainty of death ourselves. But Jesus comes over the mountains, saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions: . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

A lady who was visiting her friend was talking about the other world, when she said: "We know but little about the other side." Her friend said

to her: "You know when we invited you to visit us, and you came. When you received the invitation you had no idea about our home, the scenery, surroundings, or country. Indeed, you had never seen any place by comparison with which you could form any clear idea of it. But this you did know—that you would be most joyfully received with open arms, and, knowing this, you were fully satisfied. The scenery would come after the welcome." And so every Christian knows that there is a joyous welcome waiting for him on the heavenly shore. When we regard death as the gateway into heaven, and our journey there a going home, it takes all the bitterness out of it.

A traveler tells how he was on a little steamer on the river Volga. A young Russian officer was on board. He had plenty of money and seemed in excellent health. The scenery around was beautiful, but for all that the officer looked sad and was silent. He was going from home and friends, far off into Siberia. A little while afterward the traveler returned to Moscow with another Russian officer. They had to travel in a miserable plight, hurried over rough roads in a cart. The scenery was dull; the weather was bitterly cold; but that officer was exulting in buoyancy and delight. He was hastening to bear the news of a great victory

and to be decorated with an honorable reward. So if we give our hearts to Christ, and enter into loving fellowship with him, we shall be strong to bear life's hardships; have victory over our sorrows; look into the face of death with a smile, because we shall know that at the end of the journey there is joy and triumph.

CHAPTER XVI

A BAD AFFINITY WHICH SPOILED A BRIGHT MAN

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David.—*1 Kings* iii, 1.

I REMEMBER in my boyhood that a great bridge which had been my admiration because of its splendid appearance suddenly went down, and my father told me that it was because in building it one defective timber had been placed in the frame. The strain happened to come just on that place, and that one weak stick went down and with it all the splendid structure. Our text tells the story of the beginning of the ruin of Solomon. It was no sudden thing, this overthrow of Solomon. It began far back in his youth in that one bad affinity. Pharaoh had nothing in common with the Hebrews. He did not believe in their God. He did not believe in their religion. He had no sympathy with their purposes in any way. In the very nature of the case there could be no real harmony between them. But Solomon wanted to strengthen his government by making friends everywhere, and he

made a friend too many. Enemies are sometimes much more valuable than friends. Voltaire said a very brilliant thing when he declared that if God would take care of his friends he would charge himself with his enemies. His spirit in that statement was probably not reverent, but there is in it a great vein of truth. A bad friendship is far worse than an open enemy, for a bad friend gets inside the armor and can strike home to the heart. There is nothing so insidious, nothing so dangerous, as an evil friendship. A close alliance with one who is utterly opposed in his or her very character and personality to our own ideal of righteousness can never fail to do us harm. Gradually, if we yield to the affinity, it undermines the foundations of our own faith and destroys our power of resistance against evil. There are many remarkable illustrations of this truth in the Bible.

Samson furnishes us with the picture of a strong man ruined by a bad affinity. He was a child of promise; was reared in a most devout and godly home, and came up to manhood with the presence of the Spirit of God upon him. There was every reason to suppose that Samson would leave a name in history second to none for his service to his race. But instead he left a name which is of value only **as an awful example of what bad alliances can do**

for a man. In his first young strength Samson blundered by straying outside of his own circle and people and finding his affinity among the young folks of Timnath, who were wicked and godless. Against the protest of his father and mother he made a marriage which, from the very first, was like a millstone around his neck to drag him down. We would suppose that one such experience would have been enough to teach him wisdom; but later he made his last and his fatal affinity with Delilah. He had no idea whatever of allowing her to be his ruin. He jealously guarded the secret of his strength and was proud of his power and leadership among his people. In that pride he thought he was safe enough in making friends where he pleased. He knew she desired to learn his secret, and he was just as sure he would never betray it to her. Still, he made friends with her. There was something about her that was singularly fascinating to him. No doubt he said to himself: "What is the use of my being so strict? Here is a most fascinating woman. There is not in all Israel a woman so bright, so witty, so full of life, and after my labors I need a little latitude in the way of recreation. Of course she is not of my religion. I suppose that down at the bottom she is true to the Philistines, but she amuses me and affords me a great deal of

harmless pleasure. I shall take good care to keep the upper hand." So it was that Samson reasoned, and so he acted. When she begged for the secret of his strength he playfully told her one falsehood after another, only to bewilder her by leaving her the butt of the joke. But as time went on Samson was drawn into ever deeper sympathy and affection for the daring creature who was tempting him to his ruin, and at last he did what he never had intended to do and told her the truth. He opened his very heart to her, and she held the fortress. He did not even know the time when his strength went from him; he was not conscious that God had really departed from him till afterward. But he was doomed. His bad affinity put him in the power of his enemies, his old age was blackened with sorrow, and he died the death of a suicide. How many there are who are following in the example of these men, Solomon and Samson!

A young man came to me the other day, a big, strong, broad-shouldered fellow, and with tear-wet eyes said: "The mistake of my life was this, that when I came to New York city I did not make the right kind of friends. I was brought up in a Christian family and all my friends in my boyhood and young manhood were in the church and among religious people, and I never really intended

to get away from that class of people; but when I came to the city I had a feeling that I would like to see something of the world outside. So the first friends I made here were among those who cared nothing for the church. To them the theater and gay and giddy associations were the most important things in the world. They spent their time with cards and parties, and I learned a good many things that I had always been taught to shun. Those friends have been my ruin. I have learned to drink. I have learned to play cards for money. I have aroused in me every evil thing, and I can see now that it has all come about because I made the wrong kind of friends." No doubt I speak to some, both men and women, who could say the same thing. Nothing ever damages us so much as a bad affinity.

We have suggested to us in the story of our text the important fact that the making of one bad affinity always opens the door for others. Solomon was a very wise man and a man of great force of character. He had no idea whatever of being led to give up his religion and to go off after false gods as an idol worshiper when he made his alliance with the daughter of Pharaoh. But the alliance with Pharaoh gave him such prestige and seemed to so strengthen him among the nations that he soon

found another opportunity for a similar alliance, and it went on and on until he had made these friendships with the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Zidonians, and the Hittites. For a time Solomon maintained his strength, had his own way, and no one could see any difference in him. But all the while the change was going on. And these women who hated the true God and were true to the false religion of their own people and country were having their influence on the heart and the mind of the great king. As he grew older the change that had been going on in him all the time ever since he made that first bad affinity came to the front in his conduct. He began to build altars to idols. He built an altar to Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and then he built an altar for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and then one for Molech, the false god of the Ammonites. And finally he went the rounds, until he had built an altar to the alleged god or goddess of every false religion with whose worshipers he had made an affinity. Thus it was that in having many gods he lost the true God out of his heart and his life. In coming to feel that all religions were alike, he lost the true religion and became a man without God and without hope in the world.

Now, nothing could have persuaded Solomon to

believe that he would ever have acted in this way at the first. It was the dangerous affinities that he made that led him on step by step until his power or resistance was broken down; until his clear perception of truth was blinded; until he no longer had the power to do the right when he saw it.

You may see this same lesson in the case of that Herod who heard the plain preaching of John the Baptist with much interest. There was something in Herod that admired the courage and the heroism of John. In his heart he intended to set him free. John had plainly told him that he was a sinner, and Herod knew it, and intended to set the prophet at liberty, with honor. The only reason he did not do this was the bad affinity which he had made. He was living in an unholy alliance with his brother Philip's wife. It was that deadly sin that held him back, and under the influence of that bad affinity Herod later added a cowardly murder to his other crimes. Though he hated to do it and did not want to do it he killed John under the domination of that affinity. Again and again have I urged men and women to repent and have found them, though conscience-smitten and broken-hearted on account of their sins, and longing for salvation, yet immovable so far as any real action was concerned, because of some one deadly sin like

Herod's that held them in its damning grip. It is one of the terrible things that a guilty friendship, an ungodly passion, an unholy love, causes the people in such affinity to sting each other to death. I have no doubt that the sister-in-law of Herod loved him; perhaps she would have fought to the death and given her life to have served him. And yet her guilty love was more ruinous to him than any open enemy. Hear, I pray you, the warning of God's Word. It is a warning that is shouted from the housetops of everyday life. A bad affinity, no matter how attractive, no matter how seductive, no matter how brilliant, is the beginning of hell, here and hereafter.

Sometimes men and women, having been caught in the meshes of an evil affinity, break from it through God's power and mercy and are saved. This word "affinity" is used in the Bible only three times. One of the other cases is in the story of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who on one occasion made an affinity with the brilliant but wicked Ahab, king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was a good man, but Ahab was brilliant and full of seduction, and he drew the good king into a friendship from which he escaped only by the skin of his teeth. When Ahab had drawn Jehoshaphat into a joint war with him he undertook to save

himself in battle by sacrificing his friend. But Ahab failed and was killed. Jehoshaphat went home a very much wiser man. On his arrival home, Jehu, his private chaplain, went out to meet him, and bravely said to him, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." Jehoshaphat was wise enough to receive this as God's message, and he repented of his sins and prepared his heart to seek God, and God forgave him and gave him peace. I trust there are some who will follow that example now. If you have been led away into evil associations, and you now see your sin, do not go on until it is too late, but break away now from these entangling alliances with those who are unfriendly to Christ and, repenting of your sins, prepare your heart to seek God. If you will do that, Christ will set you free.

But I know some one will say, "That is easier said than done. I am willing enough to be a Christian, but I cannot separate myself from the associations that are destroying me. I am entangled in the net on every side." No doubt Zacchæus thought the same way, but after he had talked to Jesus face to face he made a clean sweep of the whole thing and received pardon. That poor fellow whom the demons controlled was badly

tangled up with dangerous affinities, but one morning with Jesus set him free from them all.

Jesus can cut the snarl straight through with one sharp thrust of his sword of truth. Do not wait to study out how it can be done. Bring it before God, and with repentant heart, at the mercy seat, throw yourself as a sinner upon God's grace and trust him to set you free from the wicked entanglements of sin. I am sure you cannot do it in your own strength. No doubt the more you try the more you will become entangled, but I am just as sure, on the other hand, that if you surrender your whole heart and soul to do the will of God and take Christ at his word he will save you from yourself and from all the evil associations which have been your danger and your bane.

CHAPTER XVII

THE STORY OF FIVE DAGGERS AND THEIR VICTIM

Let him alone.—*Hosea iv, 17.*

WE have in our text, as indeed through the whole book of Hosea, a people spoken of as though they were a single individual. Ephraim is talked about as though one man incarnated all the sin and folly of an entire tribe and upon his head fell all the punishment of wrongdoing. And it is as though it were to one person that I wish to use the text as a message for us. This is perfectly justifiable, for what is wrong for one is wrong for the multitude, and what is wicked for the nation is wicked for the individual.

We have here the picture of a man who has been turned adrift, as one might cut loose from an old hulk at sea. It has been tried and nothing can be done with it. It cannot be guided; it is only tossed here and there by the winds and the waves; it carries no cargo; it gets nowhere, and after a little it will go to the bottom. Let it alone. Henceforth it will be only a derelict, a thing that other vessels will fear more than all else—a thing to be shunned

or destroyed. It is very sad when that is said of a ship, but how much sadder when it is said of a man—a man made in the image of God; a man with all the powers that belong to human nature; a man gifted with the wondrous capabilities of thought, of memory, of the power to reason and plan; a man with the power to love, to hope, and to believe; a man with the power to worship and aspire; a man with a soul more delicately constructed than any musical instrument on earth, one capable of being aroused to those noble passions that bring him into fellowship with angels and into harmony with the grand purposes of God. How terrible it is to find such a man discouraged, disheartened, turned astray, his moral instincts blunted, his baser passions in control, his whole nature debased and gone wrong! How fearful to find such a man with his will-power debauched until the power to do good has been broken down, until he is only a drifting hulk, battered and beaten by the waves of passion and appetite and lust! How awful it is to find such a man drifting every whither and yet achieving no great end, the disappointment of men, the grief of angels, thwarting God, until at last even the heavenly Father says, "Let him alone!"

I am sure we could not study anything more

intensely interesting to every one of us than the question suggested by such a sight. How is it that a man may be so utterly overthrown and defeated? This book of Hosea answers that question.

There was in Ephraim, as there is in every one of us, in early life a desire to be good. God does not leave himself without a witness in the heart of any man, and Ephraim had aroused within his soul again and again the instinct of worship and the desire to obey God. But the first dagger which pierced the religious life of Ephraim was that of *indecision*. Hosea says of him, "Ephraim is a cake not turned." That is a very striking sentence. The picture is a homely one, showing an old-fashioned fire with a woman cooking over it, long before the days of stoves. The cake is put over the coals, and then something else which seems to be of more importance attracts her attention and the cake is forgotten. The time passes when it ought to have been turned over, and when the housewife comes back to it again it is too late. On one side the cake is burned black and hard, ready to fall to ashes under the touch, while on the other it is only dough; so it is good for nothing on either side. On one side it is burned, and on the other side it is raw. Are there not some among us to-day

who are in that same condition? You have given yourselves with such intensity to the things of this world that on the side of business or pleasure you are burned and charred; but on the other side, the side of your higher nature, the side of the spiritual life, in all those things that mean the development of the soul, that bring a man into communion with God, so that prayer is the natural atmosphere he breathes, so that lofty thinking and holy imagination spring unbidden into the sky of his brain, so that noble purposes and generous words and sympathetic deeds gush forth with spontaneity from the heart—on that side the cake is raw and uncooked. There has been a lack of decision and purpose in your attitude toward God. Your conscience has spoken to you, you have been aroused, but you have never given yourself to the question of obedience to God with sufficient decision of character to bring about anything vital and permanent.

Another dagger that left its bleeding wound in Ephraim, very much like the last, was *a lack of courage*. There was a moral cowardice about him that made him fail to do duty at the right time. Hosea says, "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart." There is a picture for you!—like a silly dove that, pursued by the hawk, will not fly

at once to the dovecote, where it would be entirely safe, but goes fluttering foolishly about, from one tree to another, ducking under this shrub and that, until the cruel beak of the hawk tears its neck and the daggerlike talons meet in its heart. How often men and women are like that! When they become aware of the danger of sin, when it is pushed home to their intelligence that their sin, like a bird of prey, is pursuing them with sharp beak and cruel talons, they act with all the folly of a silly dove. There is only one way of wisdom in such a case, and that is to fly straight to the dovecote of God. God's ark of salvation has windows always open for the weakest and most sinful of his children when pursued by sin, and those who fly there are never denied admittance. But how often instead of flying to the mercy seat for protection the sinner tries to hide under still other sins! He seeks ambush in business or in pleasure or in ambition or in some self-righteousness of his own, only to be sought out and destroyed. Do not, I beg of you, follow the example of Ephraim. Straight to the dovecote of God's mercy is the way of wisdom.

Another dagger which wounded Ephraim sorely was that *he set up his own judgment and his own self-will against God's law*. Hosea says of him, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but

they were counted as a strange thing.” How many times we see that now! Men try to twist the Bible into strange interpretations in order to cover their own sins. Whenever I hear a man say that he has ceased to believe in some great fundamental truth of God’s Word that goes to the heart of things about sin and righteousness I at once become suspicious that the man has a reason for not wanting to believe that truth; for one of the deadliest daggers with which the devil assails the soul of any man is to get a man to try to hide from his sin by a make-believe that it is not a sin, or that, if it is a sin, God will not punish it. How different any particular sin looks to a man after he has committed it himself! Before, when he saw it in another, it was ugly and loathsome and revolting. There was not one beautiful thing about it to clothe its horrid ugliness. But after a while, when his own feet were caught in the net, and he yielded to the deadly fascination and himself became a sinner just like the neighbor upon whom he had looked with such horror, how it was all changed! Now he sets all his wits to work trying to make excuses for his sin. He forgets that his sin is just as loathsome in other eyes as it used to be to him. He conjures up reasons why his sin is different from that of others until oftentimes he fondly imagines that it

is different and that the circumstances which were about him forced him into the sin, so that he could not help it, and therefore he is not responsible for it. He actually comes to imagine that a loving and just God will not hold him accountable for it. So he reasons until, when he reads occasionally the sharp, clear, cutting words of the Ten Commandments and comes to the one commandment that cuts like a two-edged sword clean through his own sin, leaving a wound that would let the very life-blood out of him, he rebels; but, strangely, he rebels not at his sin, but at the law itself. God's law seems a strange thing to him, a thing that is not right, and it must mean something else. O, how sin does blind men's souls! How sin does destroy men's moral intelligence! How it does becloud the clearness of their vision! But, O my friend, I plead with you to see in the doom of Ephraim the illustration of my message that, however stunted your moral nature, however distorted your conscience, however blinded your moral intelligence, though the deteriorating process go on until you may call evil good and good evil, it does not alter God's law and does not alter the truth, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

Another dagger, a dagger with perfumed blade and twining flowers about the hilt, but still none the

less deadly than the others, found its way to the vitals of Ephraim. We may call it the dagger of *transient emotions*. Hosea, speaking of it, says, "O, Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? . . . For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." How many there are who are deceiving themselves because ever and anon they are stirred with religious emotion. I have had men say to me, "It is impossible that I should be finally overthrown by sin and die unrepentant, for I have such frequent religious desires, I am so easily aroused to see wrong in myself, I am so quick to be sorry for an evil deed, and no heart is more easily touched than mine at the thought of the sufferings of my Saviour in my behalf." I have had men, and women, too, again and again talk to me like that, who were still going on in sinful lives and were really without God and without hope in the world. Now, there is absolutely no value in such religious emotion. Multitudes of people had emotions like that who have gone on until God has said of them as he said of Ephraim, "Abandon him to his fate! Let him alone!" Indeed, one who is in that situation is in the greatest possible danger of being finally lost. He is frittering away his religious capabilities. The old preachers used to talk about people becoming

ing "Gospel-hardened." I suppose what they meant by that was this, that men and women who often hear the messages of the Gospel, whose consciences are frequently aroused to rebuke them for their sins, whose hearts are often made tender by pictures of the sufferings and dying of Jesus Christ for their salvation, who yet do not repent, do not really forsake their sins and accept Christ as their Saviour, come at last to be like a sponge from which the moisture has all been squeezed. They are like the morning fog which is dispelled by the sun, because the sun drinks it up until there is nothing of it left. So there is no heart so hard as that which, having often been made tender, refuses to obey the call of God. I beg of you not to play fast and loose with your hearts. I beg of you to not play fast and loose with those capabilities for goodness which are now easily stirred into action by the divine message. These soul powers are God-given, and the possibilities of heaven are in them; but to fritter them away and squander them means to have at last a barren and an abandoned soul, and that means hell.

The last dagger, and that for which all the others had been preparing the way, was *idolatry*. Transient religious emotions are gone. Trying to excuse sin has ceased. The soul has turned away

from God. It has turned its back on God. He has given himself over to his idols. Self-indulgence has become his God. God is not in all his thoughts. And God says, "Let him alone, he is joined to his idols."

Now, I am sure that the message I have been speaking, earnest and heart-searching as it has been, is God's message to some of you. Perhaps as you have listened your heart has been greatly depressed. You have felt with discouragement and with a sinking heart the sad effects of sin in your own soul and in your own life. And there could be no excuse for speaking as I have done, though it were God's truth, if it were not also true that there is not a man or a woman here, however sad they may be because of sin, who may not here and now renounce their sins and find in Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, a balm that will heal the wounds of these evil daggers which have pierced you so sorely. Yes, even though you feel that you have reached the last stage of rebellion against God, so that you seldom think whether your life pleases God or not, so that you have sometimes even been tempted to believe that God had abandoned you and left you alone to go your evil way; yet I know that there is power in Jesus Christ to cleanse your sins, to heal your wounds, and to begin in your

heart a new and glorious life that shall grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Have you ever seen a harbor where the tide rises and falls in great contrast? And do you remember how black and desolate it looked when the tide was out, and how helpless the vessels seemed, lying on their sides in the black mud? And do you recall when the tide came in and pressed about them and lifted them up until they floated, and under the touch of captain and pilot and crew their steam awoke or their sails were spread, how they sped out across the ocean triumphant? It may be so with you. Winifred Iverson has spiritualized just such a scene as that in her little poem entitled "When the Tide Came In."

"Black and foul the harbor lay,
While no waves their way could win;
But it gleamed, transformed and gay,
When the tide came in.

"Motionless the vessels lay
Locked the harbor-mouth within;
Stranded there, and thus to stay,
Till the tide came in.

"All my life disordered lay
Graceless and begrimed with sin;
Oh, the change, that hour of day
When God's tide flowed in!

"At its ease my small craft lay
Cramped a narrow space within;
But it pulsed and sped away
When God's tide flowed in.

"Yea! the Holy Spirit came
His renewings to begin;
Leaving nothing quite the same—
Thus God's tide flowed in!"

CHAPTER XVIII

AN OPEN-AIR PREACHER

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.—*Ezekiel xxxvii, 3.*

SOME of the greatest preaching that has ever been done in this world has been done in the open air. Peter and his friends won their great victory on the day of Pentecost, in which three thousand people were converted, in the open air. The Wesleys, Whitefield, and the early circuit riders in America won their great triumphs in the fields or among the workingmen about the rock quarries or in the woods, where the multitudes gathered together to hear their preaching. But not one of them ever had an audience like this, that filled a whole valley full with the congregation.

Many people have faced sleepy audiences before now, and many have been the devices for awakening them. Our pilgrim fathers had a tithing man who went around with a weapon for the purpose of arousing those who became drowsy under the long sermons.

I heard Henry Ward Beecher say that at the

breaking out of the civil war a regiment came down from Maine. There was some misunderstanding about it, and no provision for sleeping quarters had been made for them. Mr. Beecher heard of it and invited them to Plymouth Church. The tired soldiers stretched out on the cushions in the pews. Mr. Beecher said he went in at midnight and looked at them. Every pew in Plymouth Church was full, but he said it was the first time he had ever seen all his congregation asleep at once. Here was a man, however, with all his congregation dead, and yet he awakened them and brought about remarkable victory.

Let us recall the story: It was a vision which came to Ezekiel. The hand of the Lord came upon him and the Spirit of the Lord led him out into the midst of a great valley which was full, from one hillside to the other, of human bones, and he was led around about it that he might behold the vast multitude. A hideous multitude it was! The flesh had wasted away from the skeletons. The very marrow had dried out of the bones, until the prophet was led to exclaim that they were "very dry" indeed. As he looked out with horror upon this terrible scene his Divine Guide said to him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" and he answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." He was

sure it was all helpless so far as he was concerned, but he would not limit the power of God. Then came the remarkable command: "Prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

Now that was a daring thing for a preacher to say to these dead bones. So far as his human judgment and reason could go it was absurd and full of folly. But the prophet believed in the supernatural God. He believed that all this natural world was God's creation, and that the God who made it could do what he pleased in it. So with loyal faith and courage he stood there and cried aloud to that multitude of dry and grinning skeletons the heroic message which had been given him. The effect was instantaneous and marvelous, for even as he spoke there was a great noise, and a rustle and a shaking through all that vast array, and the bones began to come together, each bone seeking its kindred bone in the body to which it belonged, and as the prophet watched, with wide-

staring eyes, still more wonderful sights met his gaze. For the sinews and flesh came upon these skeletons, and skin covered them, and then all was still and silent again. The change had been marvelous. Instead of the valley full of bones there was a valley full of human forms as though men had suddenly died, for there was no life in them. They did not breathe or move. They were men, but without life.

Then came the heavenly voice again, saying unto the prophet: "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And the prophet, still obedient to the divine voice, lifted his heart in prayer for the breath of life to come upon these dead forms, and as he prayed the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Now all this realistic vision was a dream, and God made known to Ezekiel what it meant. This valley full of dry bones was the whole nation of Israel. The people had lost hope. They were divided into factions and had lost all unity of spirit. There was no *esprit de corps* among them. All the zest and enthusiasm of their national life had dried out. They were like dead men, without

life and without hope. And the Lord said to the prophet that through his preaching and prayer his Spirit should come again into the hearts of this dead people and they should be invigorated, inspired, united, and led forth to conquest.

Although the vision was given for this local purpose, it applies equally as well as a helpful figure for our study now. For that valley full of dry bones graphically illustrates the condition of men and women who, however alive and vital and prosperous they may be in a physical or worldly sense, are dead to spiritual things. The Scripture declares that men who have not been energized by the regenerating Spirit of God are "dead in trespasses and in sins." That seems at first like an exaggerated statement. But the more you study it the less you feel that it is beyond the fact. If the human body is considered dead when it can no longer see or hear or speak or move, why should not the soul be considered dead when it has no eye for heavenly beauty, when it has no ear for the sweet melodies of the Spirit, no taste for the pleasures that rejoice God and angels and good men and women, when it has no appetite or zest for prayer or praise or for the service that brings one into fellowship with Jesus Christ?

I think many deceive themselves by imagining

that there is some love for the Lord in their hearts when down at the real current of life there is no real love for God or Christ in them. The poet well says:

“Say not ‘I love the Lord’ unless you find
Within you, welling up by day and night,
A love strong, full, and deep for humankind—
Unless you find it always a delight
To show the weary one a resting place—
To show the doubting one faith’s shining way—
To show the erring one the door of grace—
To show the sorrowing ones where they may lay
Their broken hearts—the heaviness—the care—
The grief, the agony, too sharp to bear.

“When each man is the neighbor whom we love,
According to the gracious measure of his word,
Then may we lift our eyes to heaven above,
And say with rapture sweet, ‘I love the Lord.’”

Now it is the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to reach these dead souls and to rouse and awaken them to the life of the Spirit. One of the most wonderful things I have read recently is a letter by Helen Keller, that wonderful deaf and dumb and blind girl whose brilliant soul has been brought out through a tunnel along the single sense of touch. This letter was written for the celebration of the one hundredth birthday of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, to whom the blind owe so much.

Helen Keller says: "I think only those who have escaped that death in life existence from which Laura Bridgman was rescued can realize how isolated, how shrouded in darkness, how cramped by its own impotence is a soul without thought or faith or hope. Words are powerless to describe the desolation of that prison." But how many there are for whom sin has built up walls more terrible than those which hedged in Helen Keller and Laura Bridgman, souls which, though they may live in bodies that are well-dressed and well-fed and have all their senses, are yet, to use Helen Keller's words, "shrouded in darkness," "cramped by their own impotence," and without faith or hope.

It is our mission as Christians to come and prophesy, to proclaim the Word of God, to these dry bones. And as I speak are there not some who listen, it may be almost with offense and anger at the description so blunt and plain, who nevertheless recognize this as a faithful portrait of their own condition? You are alive to money-making, you are alive to the pleasures of the world, you are alive to the appetite for food and drink, you are alive to a thirst for human knowledge, you are awake and alert and alive to the beauty of nature and art, your ear is quick to discern beautiful

sounds; but when it comes to any real worship of the God who created you and who gives you your life and being and all the blessings you have, when it comes to any real love for the Christ who came from heaven and took upon himself human sorrows and troubles and suffered shame and insult and died on the cross for you, when it comes to joy and delight in spiritual things, you are as dead as those dry bones in Ezekiel's valley of vision. What shall awaken you? God has declared that he will do it by proclaiming his Word to you. God help us to be faithful in proclaiming it! It is a terrible thing to stand before men and women in sin and fail to tell them the whole truth.

General Andrew Jackson once went to hear Peter Cartwright when that brave old backwoods hero was denouncing sin and proclaiming the solemn message of God that unless the sinner repented of his sins there was nothing for him but condemnation and woe. Some timorous soul was afraid General Jackson would be mad at such plain talk from the preacher, and so he pulled Cartwright's coat tail and whispered to him that General Jackson was in the congregation. Cartwright was never a man who whispered, and so he answered the whisper in a voice like thunder, "I don't care if he is. If General Jackson doesn't repent he

will go to hell as quick as a Guinea negro!" There is one place in the world where men must stand on an equal footing, and that is where they listen to the Word of God from his faithful messenger. And so I cry to you, O men and women who have lost the appetite for spiritual things, who have lost your love for prayer and for the Bible, who have no clear hope of heaven, who do not feel in your heart the immortal life throbbing with the certainty of immortality, who are not conscious that your sins are forgiven and that God's love in Jesus Christ cleanses you from the taint and love of sin, I cry unto you that God's Spirit is able to come upon you now and bring life to your dead souls. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

This new life is not man-made nor man-given. It must come from heaven. The breath of the Holy Spirit alone can bring new life to the soul that is "dead in trespasses and in sins." I would to God that the heavenly breath might come now!—come as it did to Cornelius and his household when Peter was preaching to them, so that Peter discerned in the midst of his sermon that the Spirit of the living God had fallen upon his congregation and that they were quickened and aroused from all indifference and in their hearts were accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour. So let the heavenly

breath come now!—come like a breath from the ocean that kisses the cheek of the invalid and brings him back again to health and strength; come as the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost to the men who had been a part of the mob which murdered Jesus, showing them their sins until hell seemed to yawn at their feet and they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Some who hear me have “crucified the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.” You have known his love, yet you have turned away from him and left him as though he were not worthy of your affection. Some of you were reared by Christian parents. Your mother taught you to pray at her knee. Your whole life has been comforted and cushioned by the blessings which Jesus brought to the world. And yet you live as indifferent to it as though he had done nothing for you or for mankind. The Spirit of God has come to you again and again with healing on his wings, but you have turned from him and clung the closer to your sins. O brothers, sisters, will you go on in this way? Will you refuse every message? Will you steel your heart against every heavenly influence? God forbid!

But perhaps some one says, “O, I long to be a Christian; but I dare not try. I am so surrounded, I

have formed such habits, I am so out of touch with goodness and with good people, that I am helpless to make any change. But listen to what God says to Ezekiel about this nation which was like a valley of dry bones. He says that he will lead them out of the land of their enemies, he will take them out of their graves and will lead them into the land of promise. That is the message I bring you. Yield your hearts to the breath of heaven and God will lead you out of the land of your enemies. He will set you free from your bondage to evil habits. He will take from you your graveclothes of sin. He will bring you into the land of promise. He will lead you into new associations and fellowships. The old body of death shall be forgotten in the new and living friendship with everything that is good and holy.

How many lonely souls I have known, who were without father or mother or friends, to whom conversion to Christ has been like a resurrection from the dead that has brought them into sweet associations that have filled all their lives with heavenly love. And I have known many others whose associations were filled with unhappiness that took away the joy of living, who, when they came to breathe the air of heaven and live in fellowship with Christ, found these sorrows to pass away and all

their earthly fellowships to be blessed and glorified by the new spirit which they found in Jesus Christ. So with reverence and humility I lift my heart to God, and I pray: "Come, O Heavenly Wind! Come and breathe upon these who are dead in sin, that they may live!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE STAR-GAZERS

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.—*Matthew ii, 10.*

THE old astrologers to whom these wise men led by the star to the manger of Bethlehem belonged believed that the firmament of heaven consisted of concentric spheres, one including others, to which the sun, moon, and stars were attached. They believed that the hemispheres which formed these separate spheres were not a good fit and let some light shine out, and that, in their judgment, accounted for the Milky Way. Beyond these spheres was to them the region of eternal day. Those dreamers of the old time also supposed that there was sweeter music than the rolling thunder which the spheres as they vibrated shook out upon the world, a music so sweet that our dull ears could not catch its tones, just as our eyes could not resolve the marvelous light of the heavenly world. The astrologers dreamed of a magnificent melody from which mortals were thus shut out—the choir

of a thousand singing stars accompanied by the music of those soft and sweet, but vast, crystal bells, the spheres of the sky.

All this shows us how the world was, as Paul says, "feeling after God" in the days before the Morning Star arose in the sky. For when Christ came it was not as the vague Milky Way, an uncertain light, but as a bright, brilliant, flashing star, clear-cut, individual, and luminous, a star so vivid and splendid that when the wise men saw it they rejoiced with exceeding joy. As some one has well said, there could not be a more beautiful conception than that a star should be the herald of the King of glory. How full of meaning it was as it shone out over the deeply shadowed earth! It was a guide, beaming and benign. It was a light, showing the safe pathway and warning against the dangers which beset human feet. There was nothing vague or uncertain about it. It was in perfect contrast with the Milky Way—the pagan "light of the highest heavens." How beautifully the pagan emblem and the Christian emblem of spiritual light each represented that for which it stood! Plato came wondrously near to the Christian ideal. Virgil seems to have seen into the gates ajar and to have caught a shadow of what was hidden beyond them—but how vague! Both, with

Job and Socrates and Philo and the host of wise men in many lands and ages, showed to men the luminous mist of the light of heaven which shone down between the loosely joined hemispheres of the sky. But Jesus Christ brought light and immortality to life. They were not only clearly defined and splendid, like the star of his nativity, but they were living like himself—living principles having in them the potency and the energy which should transform the world.

And all the brotherhood of star-gazers from that day until this have found in Christ and in his Gospel, first of all, *divine illumination and heat*. "He is the light of the world." How many of the Christmas pictures present us a wintry landscape rigid in the embrace of snow and ice. Such a picture of Christmas time suggests the moral and spiritual condition of humanity at the world's first Christmas. As we look on the frozen landscape we know that it is not dead, but only sleeping. It is held in an iron grip and is waiting for the kiss of the sun when it shall draw nearer again. We know that when the sun shall caress the earth with power in the springtime the frozen streams will melt into gladness and dance and laugh as they go on their way toward the sea. We know the barren trees will be re clothed and that the birds will sing

there again and make their nests. Life is lying dormant in all the world about us, but it is nevertheless there.

Professor Tyndall tells us that he has seen the sun rise in the higher Alps with such power that a mountain slope which in the early morning was white with snow was at noonday covered with a carpet of the most beautiful flowers. The flower roots were there under the snow; indeed, the very buds were there; nature was all ready, and when the warm rays of the sun melted the snow the great garden burst forth into blossom. So before Jesus came humanity was snowbound and icebound in the winter grasp of its alienation from God, our true Sun. The buds of flowers were striving under the snow and the human heart was hoping and longing after better things, but men were feeling only blindly. And then, suddenly, the wise men gazing up into the Milky Way beheld a star, and the shepherds watching their flocks on the plains of Bethlehem heard a song of the heavenly host, and in the manger in the little town a babe was born, and the Sun burst forth on the frozen earth, and the beams of its warmth and love started into blossom the sweetest flowers of human nature. Has he come to your heart? Is the darkness dispelled there? Is all the frost melted? Are

all the flowers of grace blooming? If not, open your heart to him perfectly this Christmas time.

But the Christmas Gospel not only brings heavenly illumination and warmth, it brings also *divine guidance*. The wise men who set out across the desert to seek the newborn King were guided by the star. When they came to Jerusalem they were for a little while confused. They made the same mistake that Naaman did when he went to the king of Israel instead of to God's prophet to be healed of his leprosy. These men came to the rulers and the politicians, thinking these would know about the Christ. But when they turned away to the prophecies concerning Jesus, and obeyed God's Word, they saw the star again, shining with brightest challenge, calling them to follow. As they looked upon its dazzling rays all their doubts disappeared and their hearts bounded with great joy. They followed the star until it stood above the Christ-child. How important it is that we turn our eyes steadfastly toward the one true, guiding Star. Many false lights spring up in the sky of the human imagination that, like the mirage of the desert, allure only to deceive.

It is related that the great Bismarck was once

asked for an autograph by a young English girl who professed extraordinary admiration for him and wrote that she would consider a few lines from him an omen of happiness for her future life. He sent her these words: "Beware, my child, of building castles in the air. They are, of all structures, the easiest to erect and most difficult to demolish." But he who follows the Star of Bethlehem with faithful gaze may be sure that the outcome of life will be peace.

When Charles Kingsley was dying he said: "It is not darkness I am going to, for God is light. It is not lonely, for Christ is with me. It is not an unknown country, for Christ is there." Then, after telling how earnestly he was looking forward, he added very solemnly, "God forgive me if I am wrong, but I am looking forward to it with reverent curiosity." How delightful are such conceptions of the "Father's house"! They help us to sing with the poet:

"One of these days will the heartache leave us,
One of these days will the burden drop;
Never again shall a hope deceive us,
Never again will our progress stop.
Freed from the blight of the vain endeavor,
Winged with the health of immortal life,
One of these days we shall quit forever
All that is vexing in earthly strife.

"One of these days we shall know the reason,
 Haply, of much that perplexes now;
 One of these days, in the Lord's good season,
 Light of his peace shall adorn the brow.
 Blessed, though out of tribulation
 Lifted to dwell in his sun-bright smile,
 Happy to share in the great salvation,
 Well may we tarry a little while."

The true-hearted star-gazer finds *all common life ennobled. Duty is exalted and lifted into heavenly relations.* Seymour Curtiss tells an interesting story of President Lincoln. In 1856 Mr. Curtiss went, in company with James Booth, to hear Lincoln speak. As he stepped upon the platform to begin his speech Booth said to Curtiss, "What a homely man! He's the homeliest man I ever saw." But as Lincoln talked and waxed eloquent Booth brought his clinched fist down on Curtiss's knee, and the latter said he hit hard, and said: "Seymour Curtiss, he is not so bad-looking after all! He grows handsomer all the time." At last, with a sledge-hammer blow of his fist on Curtiss's knee, Booth exclaimed, "Curtiss, he is the handsomest man I ever saw!" So, many of life's duties are ugly and unpleasant until there falls on them the softening radiance of the light of Bethlehem, and under the power of the constraining love of Jesus they become altogether beautiful. The motive is

everything in your work. All depends on where you get that. If your motive springs out of the ground and is of the earth earthy, then doing duty is the most galling slavery. On the other hand, if it was born among the stars it brings to commonest toil its own heavenly grace. If we do our daily duties merely as a routine they will always be hard work, and the element of drudgery and slavery will be in them. But if we catch the spirit of Christ, so that we are inspired by love, it will be very different. Love transfigures duty and makes it a privilege instead of a burden. It is still our duty, but instead of the face of a slave it has the face of an angel. Christ emphasizes his pleasure in the smallest thing we do if only it is done for love's sake. A cup of cold water is enough to win heavenly benediction if love offers it. Christ measures not the hollow of the cup but the hollow of the heart that prompts it.

"No life so poor that may not yet
Be of that wondrous coronet
The Maker of all will joyous wear,
When earth in heaven shall disappear.

"Go! What thou canst of all repair:
Love's blessings, scattered now and here,
In the waste ways of sin shall yet
Bloom for that wondrous coronet."

This religion of the stars brings a breath of heaven's peace into the midst of the strife of the warring earth. How soothing it is to go out of the heated room at night, from some study of the world's worry and strife, and look up at the serene and peaceful stars. How they seem to say to us, "During all your little strifes we are at rest." So our holy Christianity comes to the world with the olive branch from the realms of eternal peace.

There lingers yet in English law the ancient custom of the *heirloom*, a species of hereditary property that no spendthrift can squander, no unworthy inheritor destroy. Certain costly jewels, valuable paintings, rare relics, descend unfailingly from father to son, and though the heir may appreciate them but little or put them to unworthy uses they cling to him in spite of himself, and when brought to light by successive inheritors they are, as sandalwood or cedar, fragrant with the inextinguishable memories of the past. Thus, Canon Wilberforce says, Christmas is *the world's heirloom* in the sphere of faith and morals. Many who have, spendthriftlike, squandered their spiritual inheritance, and are to-day unthinking, indifferent, prayerless, will nevertheless at Christmas time feel, they know not why nor whence, an unwonted

glow stealing over them with the power and the mysteriousness of a higher life.

It is a broken-hearted world, full of sin and wrong-doing, and even while the bells are ringing for Christmas time we know that the nations are armed to the teeth and the world is by no means free of war. Yet Christmas is the promise and pledge of the coming of perfect peace, and there is no part of the earth where its message has gone but that into the soldier's camp and even into the dungeon and the jail there will come something of the radiance and the hope and the promise of the coming reign of the Prince of Peace.

Judge Templeton, of Knoxville, Tenn., has related this story of his father, who was a preacher and a refugee in Georgia at the time General Sherman made his great march from Atlanta to the sea. In spite of the warlike times about them the old gentleman was conducting a revival at a little house called Pine Log Creek Church. The times were most terrible and the whole country was subject to visitations of marauding parties from both armies. One day the old man was preaching a sermon of unusual power, and before he had gotten well under way a gang of Confederate soldiers rode up and, dismounting back of the church, asked if

they might be admitted. They were cordially invited in and took prominent seats.

Not long afterward a cloud of dust was seen in the road from the opposite direction to that from which the Confederates had come, and pretty soon the tramp of horses' hoofs was heard and it was discovered that it was a squad of Federal troops. And before the Confederates in the church could be apprised of their approach they had ridden up to the door. Perceiving that religious services were being held, they alighted and asked to be admitted. They were then told that there were Confederate soldiers in the church, but they insisted on going in and were also admitted.

Naturally the strange spectacle created some consternation in the congregation, and for a time it seemed as if the confusion would break up the meeting; but the aged preacher raised his voice and began most fervently to plead for a better life, beseeching his soldier hearers to surrender to Christ and abandon their sins. He preached with great unction, the strange scene lending him inspiration. Strong men were stirred to the depths and wept like children, and the scene of confusion was soon changed to one of strong religious awakening.

When the sermon was concluded he invited those who were convinced of sin to come forward to the altar and talk and pray with him on the all-important subject. Then occurred one of the grandest sights ever witnessed. Those soldiers, enemies to each other, engaged in a bloody war, arose as one man, friend and foe together, and marched to the front of the church and knelt together, Confederate by Federal, their muskets joining and crossing each other, their revolvers touching each other as they knelt, their heads bowed upon the same altar, and their tears mingling in their deep contrition and profound feeling. All animosities were forgotten, all strife was forgotten. They were together as brothers around the common altar.

After the service they met on the outside of the church, shook hands, pledged fraternity, and each party went off, taking opposite directions. They had been looking for each other with murderous intent. They found each other, but because Christ was there also they separated with love instead of hate, friendly instead of angry.

Christmas is not only the pledge of peace between man and man, but it is also the hope and the pledge of peace in every human heart. Christ raises the standard of peace in each individual soul. Some one interprets his promise in song:

"I promise only perfect peace,
Sweet peace that lives through years of strife,
Immortal hope, immortal life,
And rest when all these wanderings cease;
Take up thy cross
And follow me!

"My yoke is easy; put it on;
My burden very light to bear.
Who shareth this my crown shall share—
On earth the cross, in heaven the crown;
Take up thy cross
And follow me!"

CHAPTER XX

SHAKING OFF THE VIPERS

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.—*Acts xxviii, 3-5.*

THIS little incident is a part of one of the most interesting stories in the history of the life of Paul. Paul was on his way to Rome to be tried before Nero. They were going by ship, and it was at the opening of winter when fierce storms were not unusual in those seas. The ship touched at The Fair-havens, and when it came time to sail Paul argued with the Roman officer and the captain of the ship against sailing until the weather was settled. But the harbor was not very good, and the sailors and soldiers wanted to get into a larger town for winter quarters, where there would be more opportunity for the sort of jollity in which they delighted. Paul assured them that he was convinced they

would not only risk the loss of the vessel but the loss of their own lives by sailing at that time. But the officer, believing that the captain of the ship knew more about such things than a preacher who like himself was a landsman, ordered the sail to be set. He was specially aided in this decision by the fact that the weather was very mild and a most delightful south wind was blowing. But that south wind proved to be very deceitful, for no sooner were they out of sight of land than a terrible storm beat upon them. Weather-beaten sailor as he was, the captain had never seen so fierce a storm on any sea. At last they threw overboard not only the cargo, but the very tackling of the ship, trying to get rid of everything on which the wind could take hold. Finally all hope was gone, except in the heart of Paul. One morning he stood forth among the utterly disheartened sailors and soldiers and said with a cheerful voice, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." Even Paul could not resist saying, "I told you so." But if he had had nothing else to say he would have kept still. I imagine they would have thrown him overboard if that had been all the message he brought. But what followed took the sting out of it. "And now," said Paul, "I exhort you to be of

good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." From that day on Paul was the life of that party, and took the lead in everything. Even the Roman officer did everything that Paul said. In an emergency the real leader will always come to the front. Shoulderstraps do not count for much in a great emergency when life and death is at stake. Paul was a prisoner in chains, but the Roman soldier and the captain of the ship did his bidding without question.

After the storm had continued for two weeks, and the fright and hardship and exposure and lack of food had worn them all out, Paul urged them that they must eat, and he assured them that not a hair of their heads should be lost. Then he took food himself, "and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat." Luke says that his example was contagious, and they all became cheerful and made a good square meal. There were two hundred and seventy-six people on board and when the ship

finally went to pieces they all escaped to land. The island on which they were cast was called Melita. The people were barbarians, but they were kind, and built up a fire by which the drenched refugees from the wreck might dry themselves. Paul's chains had been taken off, and being always a helpful sort of man he soon gathered up a bundle of sticks on his own account, and threw them on the fire, and as he stood over the fire warming himself there came out of the bundle of sticks which he himself had gathered a viper that sprang on him and set its fangs in his arm. The ignorant and barbarous people gathered about, being full of superstition, thought that it was some punishment for his crimes. They said to themselves that he must be a very bad man, who, though he had escaped from the sea, vengeance would not allow to live. But when Paul shook the viper off into the fire as though it were nothing, and his arm did not swell or show the effect of poison, they quickly changed their minds, and concluded that it was a god that had been cast upon the island.

That was the beginning of great blessings to that island. The shipwrecked mariners and soldiers with Paul had to spend three months there before a ship came to take them off, and Paul spent that whole time in deeds of mercy. He healed their

sick and left a train of good deeds behind him that could never be forgotten.

It is interesting to note that Paul came upon this viper while he was busy seeking to add not only to his own comfort but to that of his shipwrecked companions. It was out of the bundle of wood which he himself had gathered and thrown on the fire that the peril came. I wish to use this story to suggest to us the vipers that threaten us in the ordinary avocations of our lives. A thing may be good in itself, and we may be going on in the path of our duty, gathering the materials which are necessary to build the fires for our comfort, and yet need to be on the lookout for the vipers that are hidden in the fires of life.

There is the *business man's viper*—the viper of dishonesty. Some of you men are just going into business, and, while that is a most honorable thing to do, you need to remember that there is many a lurking peril among the boxes and bags and bundles which make up the sticks with which you seek to kindle the fire of business success. You will be tempted to take some short cut to fortune. The honest path of giving value received for everything will seem a long way around, and the short cut of seizing hold upon it by some sharp trick or well-covered-up deception will tempt you.

Whenever you face such a deception remember that it is a viper on your hand. Fling it into the fire. Every defaulter's cell, many a suicide's fate, many a bankrupt's record, many a disgraced tramp, bear testimony to the poison of that viper. God has not withdrawn the Decalogue. "Thou shalt not steal" is just as much a part of God's law for a business man in New York city as it is in any little country town or in any farming settlement where you may have been brought up. Perhaps you have known men to steal, and they have not been punished for it yet. Perhaps they did not even call it stealing, but they dishonestly took their neighbor's goods and gave him no return. Do not be deceived. "God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God does not need to settle up with every man at the end of the week. But at last he settles. If there is a man here who is living dishonestly, and carrying on his business so that it is a cheat and a swindle, building up his business career on a lie, I beg you in God's name to heed the warning. No matter whether anybody knows it or not, God knows it, and you know it, and that is two too many to keep a secret. That secret dishonor is a deadly viper; shake it off, in God's name, and seek the healing balm of the Great Physician to cauterize the wound.

Then there is the *politician's viper*. All Americans are more or less politicians—most young lawyers, most newspaper men, many business men of every sort. Indeed it would be a good thing if all men, and women, too, took an intelligent, sober, earnest interest in political life. The politician's viper is insincerity. His constant temptation is to talk one thing and to mean another. He is often tempted to stand by a principle which he knows is wrong because for the time it is popular in the political party with which he is associated. That loss of sincerity is a terrible loss. No man can afford to lose the frankness of character which belongs to genuine righteousness. Many young men who start in with a bright Christian experience lose it in corrupt politics. Fling the viper into the fire—not politics, but the temptation to be insincere and untruthful in politics. Keep your manhood clean. Stand for the right everywhere. A man can be as clean and honorable and wholesome a Christian in political life as anywhere else. But he must be a man, and absolutely faithful to Christ and the truth.

There is the *viper of worldliness*. This is a very brilliant snake but a very deadly one. The young are tempted to believe that during the early years of their professional or business life, while they

are making their career, they cannot afford to give much time and attention to Christianity. After a while, when they are old and white-headed, Christ shall have the right of way. What a sad and awful blunder that is! Long before that time comes the deadly poison of the serpent has turned the whole nature aside from Christ and righteousness, and the soul has been starved with worldly things. Fling the worldly viper into the fire. Remember if you are to be a good old man you must be a good young man. If you are to be a gracious and noble woman in the days of white hair, you must now, in your girlhood, be devoted to righteousness and be beautified by the charm of Christ.

There is the *viper of an ungoverned temper*. An ungoverned temper means anger let loose; it means hate nourished; it means jealousy running away with the bit between its teeth; it means envy permitted to fester; in the end it often means murder. Let every young man with an evil temper and every young woman with a jealous, envious disposition shake the viper into the fire now. You can destroy it now! let it go a while and you cannot. Do you know that that man who is a monster of evil temper, a perfect bundle of prejudices and hates, whose words are always full of bitterness, and whose outbursts of anger are dreaded, when he

was a boy had no worse a temper than you have now? Then he could have thrown the viper into the fire. If you would shun what he is now, take warning and act. Do you see that woman who is growing old, a perfect storehouse of jealousy and envy and cruel suspicions, so that no one is pure enough to be safe from the sting of her gossiping, slanderous tongue. Once her disposition was no worse than yours is now. If you shudder at the thought of growing into a woman like that, then fling your viper into the fire at once.

Then there is the *viper of self-indulgence*. No matter how it may show itself—in the fascinations of the wine glass, in the seductions of impure literature, in evil-minded companions, or in the glamour and deadly charm of lust—it is a viper full of poison. The whole city has been shocked during the last few days by the death of a young business man. A young man handsome and brilliant in manners and appearance and successful in a business way suddenly goes out of life, either a case of suicide or a case of murder. In either case dead by his own hand, in that he had given himself over to the fascinations of self-indulgence. This case but illustrates the truth of God's Word that "the wages of sin is death." When the father of this young man was told of his son's death he ex-

claimed: "I am not surprised. I have been expecting it. I knew by the way he was going that this must be the end." O, my friend, are you going the same way? God help you to look on that rotten spot of self-indulgence and see it without its glamour; see it without the lying fascination; see it as it is, a loathsome, festering sore that will rot your whole manhood, your whole womanhood, and bring it to ruin utterly and without hope if permitted to go on. Fling the viper into the fire!

But some one says, "My viper is too strong for me. There was a time when I could have flung it away easily, but I nourished it and petted it, until now it is my master. Woe is me. 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' " If that is your case, then I bring you good tidings of great joy. Christ is able to break the deadly fascinations of your sin and rescue you from the fangs of the viper. Christ is the Great Physician who has a healing balm that can counteract the awful poison in your blood, take out of it the intoxicating fever of evil, and fill it with love and appreciation for that which is good and noble. Christ can set you free from your sins. This very hour turn away from your sins, and yield yourself to Christ, and you shall be saved.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS TO HUSBANDS

The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.—*Ephesians* v, 23.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.—*Ephesians* v, 25.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.—*Ephesians* v, 28.

THESE passages certainly give man the first place in the family. He is to take the lead. So far all *men* agree. Lucy Stone used to tell about some children of her acquaintance, one being quite a large girl of fourteen or fifteen years of age and the other a little boy of about six who had a bad lisp. The two children were sent on an errand to the neighbor's at a distant farmhouse. When they arrived at the house the girl, being so much older, was about to knock on the door, but the boy leaped in front of her with uplifted hand and male indignation, exclaiming: "The man muth rap! The man muth rap!"

Man generally is willing to accept the situation that it is his privilege to "rap." He is perfectly willing to accept the headship of the family. But

let us not overlook the fact that these sentences are just as clear on another point, and that is that the headship of the husband is of the same character as that which Christ sustains toward the Church. If you want to find the proper relation between a husband and his wife you must study Christ's relation to the Church. The whole philosophy is there. The moment we begin to study that we find that Paul has here set a great pace for husbands. For we must all admit that the relation of Christ to the Church is not that of the arbitrary master or dictator, but that of the most loving helper. Christ instead of trying to shut us out of equality with him gave his life that he might save us from our sins and bring us into an equality with him, making us fellow-heirs with him in all the blessings of God. The husband, then, to be properly the head of the wife, must in the highest and noblest sense be her helper and protector. And instead of lord-ing it over her he must seek to bring her into full fellowship with every blessing which he enjoys.

If we are to follow out this model we shall find some very interesting things for the husband. Christ sets the tone and the spirit for the Church. We are to be like him. The Church prospers when it is like Jesus. It fails when it falls away from his Spirit. When Christ is present in the Church

and the membership associate with him and love him and serve him with ready minds, then the very atmosphere of heaven pervades the Church, filling it with peace and inspiring it with courage. Now, the husband cannot escape this great fact, that in the very nature of things he makes the tone of the family life. The atmosphere depends very largely upon him, and many a man is complaining of the atmosphere of his home when he himself is to blame for it. If the husband's habits of thought, of reading, of conversation, are high and elevating, full of intelligence and good cheer and loving sympathy, the wife, and the home itself, will very soon come into harmony with that sort of thing. But if a man's habits are slovenly and neglectful of better things; if he makes of his home only a sleeping barrack and a lunch counter, and confines his conversation to the bare facts of physical existence, which answer to the ordinary grunts or growls of the pig or the dog, in sty or kennel, how can he expect that his wife will maintain against such opposition those intellectual and social and moral habits that will create a home that is full of sympathy and love and intelligence? I repeat it: A husband is the head of the wife in this fact, that he is responsible for the tone of the family life, and nothing can excuse him from it.

Again, Christ is the inspiration of the Church. He is constantly inspiring the Church to better things by his own example and sympathy. Every Christian feels that he has the brotherly sympathy of Jesus Christ whenever he undertakes to do a noble and heroic deed. Nothing is more tenderly inspiring in doing deeds of self-denial, in carrying burdens that require great self-sacrifice on our part, than to feel that Jesus Christ is pleased with us and that the great heart of our Saviour swells with holy admiration and love at the sight of our faithful work.

Now, the husband is the head of the wife in this sense also, that he should inspire her to noble deeds by his own example, by his sympathy, by his appreciation. In all these ways he is to constantly make growth in intelligence and in mental and spiritual graces attractive and delightful to her.

I was reading recently the life of Chancellor Kent, of New York, one of those who have been counted worthy of a place in the "Hall of Fame for Eminent Americans." Now, I suppose Kent was one of the greatest illustrations of the power of a man to use every moment of available time outside his daily work to make himself a great scholar and a man of encyclopedic information that America has ever known, and, indeed, one of the greatest in

the world. To the very last of his life he kept fresh his enthusiasm for knowledge. But the thing that especially interested me was that he was wise enough to determine to take his wife along with him in this search. When they were married she was very young. She had not had very good opportunities for early education, and though she was a woman of beautiful character and of strong natural abilities she had no special taste for literature. While she had not the time from her household duties to enter into all the studies of her husband, Kent so arranged his time that he spent two hours every day communicating to her and inspiring in her a taste for and a knowledge of the great English authors, and he did this for years, until she in turn became famous for the graces of her personality. In doing that he simply did his duty. He was inspiring her, as Christ inspires the Church, to the very best that was in her.

Christ cherishes in the Church the spirit of affection and love. Paul says a man ought to love his wife as Christ loves the Church—that is, with perfect unselfishness. Christ regards everything that is done for the weakest and poorest of his brothers and sisters as though it were done for himself. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” is

Christ's eternal pledge of the complete unselfishness of his love. Now, the husband is the head of the wife in this matter of the affectionate atmosphere which shall pervade and master their lives. If a spirit of affection dies out in a family in the relations between the husband and the wife there is no doubt in my mind that the husband is usually to blame for it. I am not discussing the fallibility or infallibility of wives when I say that, but I am speaking common sense from some knowledge of human nature and considerable observation of domestic affairs. I am convinced that it is a rare case where a good man and a good woman, really loving each other, enter the marriage relation, and there is a falling off in the atmosphere of affection which surrounded the wedding and the honeymoon, if it does not begin with the husband. The husband often excuses himself for not showing the same sympathetic tenderness toward his wife some years after marriage as that which he revealed to her at first. He thinks that because he is busy and has many burdens and cares that it ought not to be expected of him. What if Christ treated the Church that way. But you know he does not. He is as tender and loving and as quick to answer the prayers and approaches of men and women to-day as he was when he walked here on earth, and noth-

ing can really excuse the husband from cherishing the affection and love of his wife. Many a home has been filled with suspicion and sorrow, and many another broken up by sin, that would never have been so troubled if it had not been for the forgetfulness and neglect of the husband to do his duty in daily cherishing the love of his wife.

In doing this the husband is only making sure of his own happiness. He is only illustrating the statement made in one of our texts, which says, "He that loveth his wife loveth himself." A man who lets love die out of his family and introduces there neglect and indifference or strife and discord is planting thorns in the pillow upon which his head must lie when he comes to be old and weary. While a man is young and strong he may think he can get along without love, without sympathy, without the kind fellowship of the home; but the time will come when the world will be a very lonely place without these things. Many a man has felt the truth sung by Oliver Goldsmith:

"In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose;

I still had hopes—for pride attends us still—
 Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
 Around my fire an evening group to draw,
 And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
 And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
 I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
 Here to return—and die at home at last.”

The husband is the head of the wife in religious culture and comfort. He must be this if he is to follow the example of Jesus in his attitude toward the Church. Christ inspires in the Church sincere reverence for God, the atmosphere of prayer and devotion; and when a husband assumes that relation to a woman, and takes her as his wife, he becomes, in so far as he has the power of influence, responsible for her religious character. I think more husbands fail at this point than at any other. There are two paths here that are evil. One is where a husband undertakes to arbitrarily decide what his wife shall believe, what Church she shall join, and what religious habits she shall form. Nothing could be farther from the example which Christ sets in his relation to the Church. God has not made the husband a little pope and given him authority to issue infallible decrees concerning the conscience of his wife. And nothing is surer to make strife, or to do deadly hurt to the better na-

ture of his wife, than for a husband to take that attitude toward her.

But there is another evil path, and that is when the husband neglects his duties to God and the Church, and leaves his wife without any religious influence on his part to help her to be a Christian. I have known many and many a Christian wife, who had grown up in the Church and who had rejoiced in religious services until the wedding day, to be slowly but certainly chilled to death in her spiritual nature through the indifference and coldness of her husband in regard to such matters. I have had wives tell me with bitter tears coursing down their cheeks that they were losing the joy of their Christian lives, and that the consciousness of it was agony to them, and yet the attitude of their husbands was such that they feared if they did not stay away from the Church services or refrain from active participation in the duties of religion they would separate themselves from their husbands' love and bring upon themselves future sorrow in their homes. Now, the husband in a case like that is not only sinning against God and doing an irreparable damage to his wife, but he is robbing himself here and hereafter.

True religion is the only proper atmosphere for the family life. The marriage state makes great

demands on charity, and requires that one shall give and take with a great deal of patience. It is impossible that it can be lived in a noble and beautiful way without human sympathy and love, and that cannot be permanently fed without a spirit of reverence toward God and reliance on and confidence in the heavenly Father. Daily prayer in the home, a consciousness on the part of both husband and wife that the other has the same desire to do the will of God and meet conscientiously the duties of life, will clear the air of many a doubt and fear.

Now, the husband, as the head of the family, has the laboring oar in this matter. It is a rare thing indeed when a husband desires to become a Christian that the wife is not willing to go by his side. Are there not some who hear me this very hour who by accepting Christ and openly placing themselves on the Lord's side would thus set the keynote for the whole family circle?

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS TO WIVES

And the wife see that she reverence her husband.—
Ephesians v, 33.

THE Revised Version of the Scriptures translates this word “reverence” into the word “fear.” The word which is in one version translated “reverence” and in the other “fear” signifies a mingling of what we mean by love and esteem and by fear to offend. Mingle these all together and you have the word “reverence.” It is a noble, loving sort of fear, akin to the feeling but in different gradation to that which the devout soul feels toward God. A woman ought never to marry a man she cannot reverence. It is not enough to pity a man’s misfortunes or weaknesses and wed him in the hope that you may help him. Such a union brings sorrow and not happiness ninety-nine times out of a hundred. Marrying a man to reform him is directly contrary to the spirit of God’s Word. No woman reverences a man who is in need of reformation, and if he will not for love of her, respect for himself, and fear of his God turn from his sin:

and live righteously before marriage there is little hope that he will do so afterward. No woman can come to such a wedding with that reverential love and sentiment of honor toward her husband which the Bible teaching requires of a wife.

Such an idea of wifehood, of course, bars utterly marriages of convenience. No woman has the right to marry a man simply because he has money or an acknowledged social position, and because by such a marriage she will be able to escape hard work and wear better clothes and live in more luxurious surroundings than she would without it. Such marriages are plainly immoral. There is no sanctity, no sacredness, about such relations. No woman ever yet truly revered her husband who did not love him with all her heart, and, in addition to her love, esteem and respect him, and willingly merge her life into his, acknowledging him as her head and leader, glad and proud to be his companion and helpmeet.

If a wife thus truly reverences her husband, it will be her highest joy to make a home for him which will be worthy of the kind of man whom she has honored with her love and esteem. Her husband will be no more truly the breadwinner than she will be the bread keeper and distributor. She will not regard this as a service any the less honor-

able than his, though he be governor or president, though he be judge or minister, though he be a great merchant or banker, though he be famous and popular as an author or an orator, though his name be in all the papers and praised on every lip, and her own personality largely unknown. There will be in her heart no envy or jealousy, and she will not regard her service as the home keeper a whit less honorable than his. Nay, her heart will swell with pride in his honor, for is she not merged into his life? And is it not her privilege to make a worthy home for this man, in which he may rest when he is tired, where he may be consoled when in trouble, in which every day he may breathe an atmosphere of peace and love that quiets his brain, that soothes his nerves, that gives courage to his heart, that strengthens his soul, and sends him forth with renewed energy to win the great victories which the world so loudly applauds?

The wife who truly reverences her husband will feel that there is no sphere in life nobler than to be the home maker for her husband. We have a beautiful illustration of this in the Old Testament in the case of a family that dwelt at Shunem. It was a great house, and the broad acres of the plantation stretched far away. It was a religious family, and they entertained Elisha the prophet whenever he

passed that way. The wife was a great-hearted woman, and she said to her husband that she thought it would be a nice thing to do to build a special chamber for the man of God, so that whenever he came that way he would have his own room, and he would not feel like a stranger, but it would be like coming home. And the husband agreed to this, and Elisha and his secretary always stopped there when they journeyed through the country. Elisha was greatly touched by her kindness and wished to do something for her to show his gratitude. So on one occasion, when he was being entertained at the house, he inquired what he could do to please her. He was a great man, and could do much to advance her position in a social way, and so he offered to introduce her at the court of the king. But with quiet contentment and fidelity to her own household she answered, "I dwell among mine own people." Could there be anything more beautiful than that? To be the wife of her husband, to make his home for him, to share his simple pleasures and experiences, this was better to her than the court of the king.

A wife who reverences her husband will be so loyal to him that anything which threatens him she will feel as threatening herself, and she will not hesitate to thrust herself into the breach to help

and save him. The wife who truly loves and reverences her husband never thinks of how she may shield herself from his folly, but she is ever thinking how she may shield him from his own folly. We have a beautiful illustration of that in the first book of Samuel, where there is told the story of a wife who saved her husband's life at great risk to herself. There was a man named Nabal, who was a sheep owner. He had the largest flocks of sheep in the country, and nearly every year roving bands of Philistines came into the region and drove off a good many of his sheep. But he had the territory largely to himself, and on the whole he made a good thing of it and grew to be very rich.

About this time David and his brave band of followers, flying from the superior armies of Saul, sought refuge up in the rocky fastnesses in the midst of the great pasture ground where Nabal's flocks found their food, and for a long time they remained there, and during a whole year they kept the Philistines away and did not allow them to touch a single lamb from Nabal's herds. Not only did they defend them from the Philistines, but what was more remarkable for hungry men in a tight place, who had to live on what they could find by hunting, they did not take a single sheep themselves. It went on that way till sheep-shearing

time, and then David, who was a shepherd lad, got hungry for the taste of mutton, and he told some of his young fellows to go down to Nabal and remind him how they had taken care of his flocks, and ask him to send them up a taste of fresh meat.

Of course, if Nabal had had any sense he would have seen the wisdom and reasonableness of granting this request. But he was a hot-headed fool, and so he abused the men and sent back a stinging and bitter reply to David. It worked havoc with all of David's good resolutions to keep the peace with Nabal. He gathered four hundred of his men together and started down the mountain, vowing to kill Nabal and drive away his flocks.

But Nabal had a wife named Abigail who was as wise as he was foolish. She had been deceived in Nabal. But she had come to know what a foolish fellow he was. However, she had taken him for better or worse, and now that she found it worse and not better she did not leave him, but stuck to him like a true heroine. Some of Nabal's men told her what had happened, and in a moment she saw that David could never swallow an insult like that, and that there would be trouble. So she ordered a splendid present to be got together. With great haste she gathered up two hundred loaves of bread and had five sheep dressed, and five meas-

ures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She had this put on donkeys and sent along ahead of her, and when she met David she threw herself on her face before him, and with rare humility and wisdom she conquered David's anger and sent him back to the mountain in peace.

In all this Abigail was the true wife. Her husband was not worthy of her, but he was her husband, and she honored herself by her loyalty and fidelity to his interests. One of the very first elements of integrity in a wife is loyalty to her husband. If she does not always agree with her husband, and does not always approve of what he does, she makes a very great mistake to talk it over even with her mother or her sisters or with her friends. The tie between husband and wife is closer than the tie between a mother and her child. They two shall be one flesh. And when a woman chooses a man to be her husband she chooses to merge her life into his, and proper love and reverence and loyalty to him demand that she shall keep faithfully to his interests.

If a wife truly reverences her husband she will desire to show that esteem and love in practical ways and will seek to make herself essential to his success. One of the greatest paragraphs in litera-

ture is that description in the last chapter of Proverbs which portrays a good woman. It is said to be the words of King Lemuel, giving expression to the prophecy that his mother taught him. She who would be a noble wife in any age may well study this portrayal, for while its incidents may have local references it reveals for all time the true spirit of the wife: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh

herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

If a wife truly reverences her husband she will live in that attitude toward him which in the very nature of the case must soothe and cheer rather than annoy and irritate him. There is something about the attitude of those who sincerely esteem us and honor us that makes it almost impossible for us to be angry with them or to fail to consider what they say to us. I think that many wives have failed at this very point. A husband desires and needs to find in his wife that which will

soothe and comfort him. Perhaps he has been working all day in the midst of men who ask no odds of him, who care nothing for him, and make him feel their hostile spirit. All day long he has stood on the defensive, and he returns to his home, whether conscious of it or not, with a real need for appreciation. He needs that somebody shall approach him on the other side of his nature. All day long he has been made to feel how good-for-nothing he was, and how little he knew, and now he needs that some one shall come to him with esteem and love and with reverential kindness restore his self-respect and build him up into strength again. But if when he comes home instead of finding this he finds fretfulness or scolding or critical accusation, it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back, and all chance for peace in that home disappears.

I confess to a good deal of sympathy with the young wife who was called on by the parish visitor. The husband was a stoker on the railroad, and the visitor urged her to be present on Sunday at church.

"Will you please walk in till I show you something," was the woman's answer; and she conducted her visitor to the little kitchen where her husband sat by the fire. He had just come home

for half an hour to have his tea, and was watching the kettle with the most absorbing interest. He was, of course, in his working clothes, and his face and hands were of a deep, oily black, after the manner of stokers.

"Now, ma'am," said the woman, pointing to him, "you see that there man. That's my husband, and I'm bound to do a part by him, ain't I?"

"Surely," said the visitor, anxious to uphold the duties of matrimony.

"Very well, then. Would you like to know how I pass my Sundays? A-washing of he!"

That woman up to her light was a true wife. The same spirit in all circles of society would greatly increase domestic peace.

If a wife reverences her husband she will care more for his good opinion and respect than for that of anyone else in the world. She will keep her best disposition, her sweetest good humor, her most sensitive spirit of appreciation, and let them all blossom for the husband whom she reverences. The woman who does that will have little trouble to secure the loyal adherence of her husband.

A country woman came once to William Hutton, and told him that her husband behaved unkindly to her, and sought other company, often passing his evenings away from home, which

made her feel very unhappy; and, knowing Mr. Hutton to be a wise man; she thought he might be able to tell her how she should manage to cure her husband.

"The method is a simple one," said he; "but I have never known it to fail. Always meet your husband with a smile."

The woman expressed her thanks, dropped a courtesy, and went away. A few months afterward she waited on Mr. Hutton with a couple of fine fowls, which she begged him to accept. She told him, with tears of joy and gratitude glistening in her eyes, that she had followed his advice, and her husband was cured. He no longer sought the company of others, but treated her with constant love and kindness.

What a woman sows in her husband's heart she is pretty sure to reap again. J. Stuart Blackie, the great Scotchman, was scarcely ever seen for many years without a plaid, which fact came to be famous. He once told Donald Macleod how he came to wear it: "When I was a poor man, and my wife and I had our difficulties, she one day drew my attention to the threadbare character of my coat, and asked me to order a new one. I told her I could not afford it just then, when she went, like a noble woman, and put her own plaid shawl on my

shoulders, and I have worn a plaid ever since in memory of her loving deed."

A woman who truly loves and reverences her husband will seek to live a life that will help him to the noblest living. She cannot do this without being a Christian. Only the love of God in a man's heart can help him to be the right kind of a husband, and only the love of God in the heart of a woman can help her to be the right kind of a wife. Marriage, with true love, where hearts are united together in tender fellowship, each conscious of the other's love for God and thinking of the home on earth as a preparation for the home in heaven, is the sweetest thing in the world. But it requires the divine love and the divine hope to give the true glory to the bond between the husband and wife.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS TO FATHERS

Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—*Ephesians* vi, 4.

THE laboring oar in the family life is in the hands of the father, and he can neither throw it away nor transfer it to anybody else without great loss to himself and to his family. A man has no right to assume the position as the head of the family and then undertake to evade the responsibilities that belong to that position. In my judgment the frivolity of fathers, the lack of a keen sense of responsibility for the education and training of children, is one of the most dangerous and threatening points in modern civilization. Mount Pelée, pouring out its deadly gases and its choking ashes upon the towns and villages that cluster about its feet, spreading terror and danger and death everywhere, is like careless, frivolous, ungodly parents in a family. Many a time have I seen belched forth from a father's lips and example the destructive lava and the volcanic gases that have

utterly desolated and blighted the smiling, fruitful promise of the children growing up about his feet.

It is no small thing for a man to take upon himself the obligation of fatherhood, and the man who does it lightly, without feeling its responsibility, is either lacking in brains or in heart, or both. The Bible everywhere puts the emphasis on the father as the responsible head of the family, and the one on whom rests the burden of duty in the nurture and training of children. You pick up the Bible anywhere, in the Old Testament or in the New, and you will see this fact brought out clearly. Speaking of Abraham, the Almighty said: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

And after the conquest of the promised land, when Joshua set up the monuments in Gilgal, he said: "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall say unto them"—thus and thus. Joshua put on the father the duty of instructing the children in the history of their people. It was not to be turned over even to the mother or the schoolmaster or the priest. And so Paul in our text holds the father responsible for the bringing up of the children. I lay the emphasis here be-

cause I am profoundly convinced that in our generation fathers are shirking their duty in the control and education and development of their children. The time was when the mother had scarcely anything to do with either the government or the education of the children of the family. But as time went on, and the girls began to be educated as well as the boys, and under the gracious influence of Christianity the woman began to be treated as the man's equal and her position as a wife and a mother was improved so that she began to stand in her proper place by the side of the husband and father, then the father began to shirk and get out from under his end of the burden, until in tens of thousands of families the responsibility of bringing up children is thrown almost entirely on the mother's shoulders. In innumerable cases the mother is doing the whole work of the nurture of the children. The father seems to feel that if he contributes a liberal sum of money for their support and pays the bills when they come in he has done all that could be expected of him. What an absurd idea of family life! That is the way a man runs a horse farm or a cattle-breeding establishment; an overseer manages it, and the owner foots the bills when they come in, and goes occasionally to look over the stock. He is proud if one of his

horses wins a race or one of his heifers takes a blue ribbon. Is not that very much like the way some fathers treat their families to-day? They give all their time and energy to business. They pour their souls into that. They expect the family home to be kept up, and if one of their boys or girls win a prize they are proud. If, on the other hand, a boy or girl goes to the bad, they think the mother must have been careless in her discipline or oversight. The paying of the bills of the household is the smallest part of a father's duty. I have seen many a family where the children would have had an infinitely better chance for a happy and successful career if they had been brought up in poverty, with a father's wise and thoughtful supervision, than to have lived in a fine house, surrounded by abundant luxury, with no strong hand to guide and control them. The ruin of families upon every side of us may be directly traced to the lack of fatherhood. There is a nominal father, but the office is not occupied when it comes to the bringing up of the children with any personal magnetic touch of his upon them.

The Bible is not lacking in examples of the ruin that comes to family life where a father fails to do his duty by his children. You take the case of Eli. Eli was one of those well-meaning, goody-goody

sort of men who utterly ruined his children. He never set them a bad example so far as doing any sinful deeds were concerned, but he had no backbone, and there was no grip in his fingers when it was necessary to lay a restraining hand upon his sons. The boys were full of life and vigor, and with a wise father's strong and positive control they would have grown up to be the pride of their father and the glory of the nation. Eli wanted them to be good, and no doubt he persuaded and entreated them; but he did not restrain them, and so they made themselves vile and grew up to be the plague and the curse of their country. Eli was responsible, and God held him to that accountability.

There never was a clearer illustration of the ruin that may come through the failure of a father to do his duty than in the case of David and Absalom. In the midst of his life David fell away into sin. It was just at the time when Absalom, a bright, beautiful, dashing boy with great animal spirits, gifted marvelously in personal beauty, was growing up. The influence of his father's backsliding and evil example told on the career of Absalom and not only brought ruin to him, but no wound went so deep into David's heart as the wound made by Absalom, the son whom he had poisoned by his own example. No picture of family life in all

literature is sadder than that of David when he had been watching by the gate to learn the result of the battle, until at last the messengers came and told of the fate of his son. All the news of victory was as nothing to him. What was victory if it cost him the life of his son? Absalom's later treachery and rebellion were all forgotten then. He remembered only the beautiful child, and perhaps the sting was in his soul that if he had only done his duty by that handsome youth the result would have been very different. So David climbs up the stairs with weary step, tears running down his cheeks, and his officers hear him saying over to himself as he goes, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" God pity the father who is getting ready for an experience like that!

It is the duty of the father not only to hold himself responsible for the general control and government of his family, but it is the direct duty of the father, as set forth in our text, to nurture childhood and to see to the religious education of the children. No father can do this properly simply by seeing that they go to Sunday school or church. There is a great lack of religious education in the families of the people. It is the father's shame when the children grow up to be young men and

young women without caring for the Bible and without proper instruction in religious duties. The best time to begin this is when children are very small. The first lessons and associations are the ones which are never forgotten.

Some years ago a native Greenlander visited the United States, but found the climate so hot for him here that he made up his mind to return home and took passage on a whaler that was going that way. But he died before he got back, and as he was dying he turned to the sailors who were around him and said, "Go on deck and see if you can see ice." Poor fellow! When he was a baby the first thing he ever saw, after his father and mother, was ice. The very house he was born in was made of ice. The window was a slab of ice. He was cradled in ice. The water that he drank was melted ice. The scenery about his home was ice. The mountains were of ice. The fields were filled with ice. When he became a man he had a sledge and twelve dogs that carried him fifty miles a day over ice. Many a day he stopped over a hole in the ice, hour after hour, ready to thrust his spear into the head of any seal that might appear. He had always been accustomed to see ice, and he knew that if his companions on the ship could see ice it would be evidence that he was near home. The thought of

ice was the very last thought in his mind as it was the very first impression ever made there. The earliest impressions are the deepest. Those things which are instilled into the hearts of children endure forever and ever. So I say to you, fathers, while your children are small and their hearts young and tender and their minds fresh and not yet preoccupied is the time to possess their souls for Christ and righteousness.

When a lady once told Archbishop Sharpe that she would not communicate religious instruction to her children until they had attained the years of discretion that shrewd old priest replied, "Madam, if you do not teach them the devil will!"

Coleridge tells us that he had a friend named Thalwell who thought it very unfair to influence a child's mind by inculcating any opinions before it had come to years of discretion to choose for itself. By way of answer, Coleridge showed him his garden, and told him that it was a botanical garden.

"How so?" said he. "It is covered with weeds."

"O," replied Coleridge, "that is only because it has not yet come to its age of discretion and choice. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil toward roses and strawberries."

This is a significant opening sentence in our

text, this exhortation to fathers that they do not provoke their children to wrath, lest they discourage them, as Paul puts it in Colossians. This may be done in a number of ways. It is possible to have too much prohibition and not enough of positive inspiration in the life of a child. A father can say "Don't" all the time, and if he never says "Do," thus giving a proper outlet for the storage battery of power that is in every healthy child, the result is that the child will not only be provoked to anger but will be hardened and discouraged. Many children who are considered bad children are only made to appear such because they are not shown any proper outlet for the force that is in them. Many a child is like a young, undisciplined horse which is not vicious but only untrained, and all it needs is an open road, a quiet firm hand on the reins, and a chance to go. Let it go without the reins and it will wreck everything; but with a good driver and a good bit it will do good service. So it is a kindly, firm control, with a chance to really grow and do things, rather than an everlasting "Don't," which encourages childhood to do its best.

Children are often provoked to wrath and become discouraged because they do not feel that the government over them is sympathetic and kind in its control. If the child feels that the father is a

tyrant and governs him just because he can, and says he can do this or do that without any feeling or care for the child's happiness, then he will become angry and sullen and hard. But the father can do the very same things, and if he shows the child by his spirit and by his conversation with him that he is all the time seeking the child's good he will be able to hold the loyalty and devotion which he would otherwise lose. It is an awful thing to make a child feel that the father is a tyrant. To a little child a father stands in the place of God. And many a man after he has grown up has thought of God as a tyrant and has felt hard and sullen because his father gave him that impression in his childhood.

Children are often permanently turned away from goodness because the father is unyielding and unforgiving and holds a wrong done by the child for a long time before the child's mind. If God dealt with us that way how soon we would be discouraged. When a wrong has been confessed and has had either its punishment or its forgiveness and the matter is settled, then it ought to be *settled*. God says when he forgives that it is like that which a man flings over his back and drops in the depths of the sea, so that it never shall be seen again. A father ought to follow that example in dealing with

his children. Christ gives us one great illustration of what fatherhood ought to be in the forgiveness of faults. He tells us the story of the young fellow who had gone out from the old home, and had gone away from his father, and had wasted his substance with riotous living. He associated with a bad lot of people. He was in a circle that sneered at love and goodness. But after his fortune was squandered these sinful and reckless associates left him to his own misery. He had a hard time of it, and after a while his thoughts went back to his father. Now if the father had been a hard, unforgiving, tyrannical sort of a man he would never have gone home. But as the boy thought of his father's goodness and gracious generosity, he said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." That is the way he thought it would be. You see he had been so long away from home, and had associated with such a selfish lot of folks, that it had dimmed his sight as to the goodness of his father. He did not dare to believe that even his father, good as he was, would so completely forgive him as to give him the old place of a son. Yet this is how it turned out: "But when he was yet a great

way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, . . . and said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

That is the kind of fathers Christian men are to be.

CHAPTER XXIV

IS YOUR GOD ASLEEP?

Peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.—
1 Kings xviii, 27.

Thou art near, O Lord.—*Psalms* cxix, 151.

A SCHOONER was once discovered in the Pacific Ocean, dismantled in the storm and drifting helplessly on the waves. The mainmast had been broken off close to the deck and it was dragging after. Lashed to the iron davits astern, and directly over the wheel that whirled back and forth as the waves washed under the rudder, was the body of the mate, dressed in oilskins. A weather-beaten sou'wester still remained on his head. He had lashed himself to one of the davits, and there the body hung in the lashings. The left hand trailed over the vessel's rail, and on its third finger was a plain gold ring. His lifeless hand had dropped from the wheel, and though the dead man was still at his post the vessel drifted where it pleased. A ship is in a hard plight with a dead man at the helm. But think of a world, a universe, with a dead God at the helm who does not hear or

answer. That is the fearful fate to which some people would condemn us.

The picture suggested by this first text is very striking. It is on Mount Carmel, where Elijah has challenged the prophets of Baal to a test. Each is to build his altar, and put his offerings upon it, and call upon the name of his god, and the god who answers by fire, he is to be regarded as the true God. So the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, the idol, killed a bullock and laid it on the altar made of wood. They did this early in the morning, and then they all began to pray to Baal to send fire to consume the offering. From morning even till noon their loud prayers rang out, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But their prayers were not answered, and there was no sign of fire about their altar. At noon Elijah came out, and said mockingly to them, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." This drove them wild with anger. Yet in spite of all their cries and efforts no answer came to their prayers.

But when Elijah called upon the God who made heaven and earth to bear witness to his prophet there was immediate response; and in our second text the psalmist says, "Thou art near, O Lord."

Many people are living to-day as though they thought God to be asleep. But he is awake and very near to us. Paul said on Mars' Hill that he is "not far from every one of us."

Two Oxford scholars made awhile ago a very interesting discovery in Egypt. On the edge of the Libyan desert, a hundred and twenty miles south of Cairo, are the ruins of an old Roman town which was one of the chief centers of early Christianity in Egypt. In the rubbish heaps of this town, amid large quantities of papyrus, they have found one fragment, six inches long and less than four inches wide, which contains eight "Sayings of Our Lord." It is known that some of the early disciples made collections of sentences which fell from the lips of Jesus, and this has every appearance of being such a collection. Its unique importance arises from the fact that scholars believe that this manuscript must be of as early a date as the year of our Lord 200, and is therefore a more ancient document than any extant manuscripts of the gospels. Several of these sayings are familiar, as they already exist in the gospels. Two of them, however, are quite new and very striking, and have already become the subject of much speculation and discussion. One of them is, "Raise the stone and thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I." What an im-

pressive statement of the immanence of Christ throughout the realm of nature, the great truth of which pantheism is the perversion and which finds such definite and lofty statements in the writings of Paul. God is ever near to us in nature and in our daily lives.

God is near to us in times of darkness and trouble. When the disciples were on the lake at night and the storm came up, and in their fright they thought they were utterly separated from Jesus and were to be drowned alone in the darkness, he came to them through the storm, and when the storm was at its height they saw his form and heard his comforting words, "It is I; be not afraid." Though they did not know it, he was near to them. And so he is near us when we need him.

A mother who was stopping at a summer hotel in the mountains, with her little child, came out on to the veranda as a thunderstorm was coming up, and ran up and down the piazza exclaiming: "Where is Freddie? Where is Freddie? He is so terribly frightened at a thunderstorm. I don't know what he will do without me!"

A few moments afterward the boy came running up the walk, almost breathless, his face plainly showing the great fear that was in his heart.

"O mother," he exclaimed, "I was so frightened, I ran just as fast as ever I could to get to you."

The mother sat down and took the frightened child into her arms. She allayed his fear and quieted him until his head rested calmly on her loving heart. That is what God means when he says to you, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Do not for a moment think that God is so far away that you cannot run to him when the thunder rolls and the lightning flashes in your daily life. He is a God near at hand, and he will comfort you with all the tenderness of a mother.

God is near to those who are true to him, even to old age. When Bishop Hedding was a very old man he was entertained one Sunday evening in a house where he sat in the window to listen to the sermon, not feeling able to go to the service. Two young men came in to see him afterward and found him sobbing as if his heart would break. With some alarm they asked him if he was sick or in trouble. His reply was, "No, no, my brethren; you can do nothing for me."

His tears fell fast, and his breast seemed to heave in its agitations more and more, until they became alarmed and excitedly asked, "What is amiss, bishop?"

At last he said, "Dear brethren, I have been sitting here listening to that brother while he was preaching. I could hear every word, and I have been examining my poor old heart to see whether it loved the Lord Jesus as much now as it did when I was of your age, my boys."

As he spoke his lips quivered.

Finally one of the young men gently asked: "And what, bishop, is the result of the hour's investigation?"

"O my child, the result is written in the Word. I can say with Peter, 'Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!'"

Then the young men knew that the old bishop's tears were tears of joy. And what glorious wealth was his in that nearness to God!

God is ever near when his people share the little that they have of comfort or blessing with another in still greater need. You remember that Bible story of how the prophet came to the widow who had got to the bottom of her bag of meal and her cruse of oil. She had scraped out what was left, and in her despair was going to bake it in one last little cake, and then there seemed nothing to do but that she should fold her darling boy in her arms and they would die together. And then came Elijah, the prophet, hungry and starving. And in-

stead of eating the cake herself she baked it for him. And after that the cruse of oil never failed and the bag of meal never was empty until the days of famine were gone. That old miracle has been realized over and over again in the lives of multitudes of men and women ever since. God is always near to the man that shares with his neighbor. Jesus declares that when we share with our brother, however poor or humble or lowly he may be, we shall find him there in that man; in fact, we shall be ministering to him, and he will receive it and honor it and reward it as though we were ministering to him in his own person. My friend, if you want to find God go forth trying to help your brother man with a loving heart, and you shall find him.

God is ever near when we sin, and we cannot hide ourselves from him. Adam and Eve met God with perfect freedom and gladness until they had sinned, and then they tried to hide. But God came calling in the garden—calling them by name until they answered. Cain slew his brother and thought no one was looking on, and no doubt imagined that it would never be known how Abel came to his death. But when God came to Cain and asked him where his brother was, and Cain sullenly answered, with a sneer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" God

said to him, with sad sternness, "Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

It is not that God watches us like a detective spying upon us that he may find a flaw in us, but love always sees the mar and the blemish in the one beloved before anyone else sees it. No one can smell the taint of liquor on a man's breath as quick as the mother or the wife who would die if need be to save him from disgrace.

But God is not only near us when we sin, he is also near us when we repent of our sin and seek forgiveness. Christ saw the unrest and the desire in the eyes of Zacchæus, and went home with him to his house that he might be near him to help him and save him. Blind Bartimæus had a longing to see the Saviour, and ere long Jesus walked that way, and when the blind man knew it he cried out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped his journey and told them to bring the blind man to him, and he opened his eyes and forgave his sins and took him with him as one of his friends.

Just because you are sinful and have great need of Christ he will come near to you now if with earnest heart and sincere repentance and faith you call upon his name.

CHAPTER XXV

A STORY OF THE SHEEPFOLDS

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.—*Luke xv, 5.*

ONE of the most beautiful figures in the Bible, used to represent to us God's thought and feeling about us, is that of the shepherd and his care over his flock. And this beautiful story which Jesus tells us ought never to be read by any man or woman without making sin seem black and terrible and arousing all the possible gratitude and love of the heart. What a striking and beautiful picture it is! The sheep have just been brought to the fold in the evening, and one by one as they go in through the little narrow stone door the shepherd counts them, and he makes only ninety and nine when there ought to be a hundred. His heart is anxious, and to the dismay of the sheep he has them pass out again, and recounts them, but he is still one short. He is now thoroughly convinced that somewhere during the day's wanderings a sheep has been lost; but still as they go back into the fold he counts them again for the third time, and now he knows for a certainty that one sheep is

lost, and as he looks them over he remembers which one it is. It is a little lamb with a black spot on the foreleg and a scar across the side of its face. When it was very young it fell over the edge of the precipice one day, getting not a very bad fall, but it cut through the skin on the face, and the blood ran, and he carried it home that day in his plaid and kept it all night on his bed, and the next morning it was ready to go again with its mother. And now the little stumbler is lost. It may have fallen over the precipice again and be lying mangled at the bottom of the glen, or it may have been behind a great stone when the rest of the flock moved on, and so not have discovered their absence until they were out of sight, and may be wandering helpless now, in danger not only of stumbling to death but in danger of some prowling wolf that may come upon it with sudden destruction. Without waiting further the shepherd goes out to seek for it. He does not stop to get his supper. It will soon be too dark to search safely, and he must go now. All through the sunset and the twilight and the gathering darkness the shepherd goes, seeking for that lost lamb, crying aloud to attract its attention. Carefully he picks his way, as it gets darker, back over the mountain track they have traversed during the day, and at last he hears a wolf howl.

He shudders. He thinks he hears another sound, and his heart almost stands still as he bends his head to listen. It is the bleat of the lamb. Almost recklessly he runs now, and arrives just in time to brandish his rod in the eyes of the startled wolf and seize the lost lamb. Throwing it over his shoulder he turns rejoicing on the tramp backward to the sheepfold. Not a word of anger has he for the sheep that has caused him all the trouble. No, it never seemed so precious to him as now, when he has come so near to losing it.

In doing this he acted just like a shepherd. A traveler describes a scene which he once saw that strongly reminded him of this parable. One day with a friend and their guides he was making his way with ice ax and alpenstock down the Aletsch glacier, when he observed a flock of sheep following their shepherd over the intricate windings of the crevasses, and so passing from the little pastures on one side of the glacier to the pastures on the other side. The flock had numbered two hundred, all told. But on the way one sheep had been lost. The shepherd appealed to the travelers to know if they had seen it. Fortunately one of the party had a field glass. With its aid they discovered the lost sheep far up amid a tangle of brushwood on the rocky mountain side. It was beauti-

ful to see how the shepherd without a word left his hundred and ninety and nine sheep on the glacier waste, knowing they would stand there perfectly still and safe, and went clambering back after the lost sheep until he found it.

There is a story of St. Francis that he once saw a mountaineer in the Alps risk his life to save a lost sheep, and was so struck with it that he cried out aloud, "O God, if such was the earnestness of this shepherd in seeking for a mean animal which had probably been frozen on the glacier, how is it that I am so indifferent in seeking my sheep?"

How our hearts ought to be touched when we turn to the application of this story to ourselves. A writer in the Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." How many of us remember with very tender hearts that when we were wandering away in the darkness and danger the shepherd-love of God followed after us until he found us and brought us back. In a great convention of Christian workers a distinguished bishop began his address by telling the story of a youth who belonged to a Bible class, but at last became careless and worldly and discontinued his attendance at the class. One Sunday morning the class met, but this young boy's place was empty, and the leader looked for the familiar face in vain. He could not be con-

tent to conduct the Bible study as usual while he was ignorant of the condition and circumstances of the missing scholar. "Friends," he said, "please read, sing, and pray. My work is to seek and find a stray sheep," and he started off on the quest. At this point the tears came into the eyes of the bishop, and with beaming face and trembling voice he continued: "The stray sheep is before you. My teacher found me, and I could not resist his pleading. I could not continue to wander and stray while I was sought so tenderly." O, how many sheep dear to the heart of God would be saved from wandering to their ruin if every pastor and Sunday school teacher had thus the shepherd's tender love and perseverance to seek after the lost until it is found.

Neither men nor sheep become lost intentionally. No sheep in its willfulness ever said to itself, "I will slip away from the flock and get lost so that I may be devoured by the wolves;" neither does any young man or young woman say, "I will wander away from the path of right and safety; I will put myself in the way of becoming a drunkard or a libertine or a person full of selfishness and evil." You cannot imagine anyone doing that. People are not ruined that way. But they stray aside; they wander off and are lost.

Are you lost? If your sins have not been forgiven, if you are living without prayer and without communion with your Saviour, then you are lost. And though the wolf of sin may not yet have attacked you in a way to seriously alarm you, you stand in all the deadly peril of one who is without God and without hope in the world. Christ is seeking to find you. He is searching for you now. I am here and many of these Christians are here with no other thought or desire than to be what Uncle John Vassar used to call himself, "God's shepherd dogs," in bringing you back to the fold. I only wish I knew how to tell you how tenderly the Lord is seeking after you, and how lovingly he will take you in his arms and carry you to safety if you will allow yourself to be found of him now.

One week evening in one of our large cities an old woman, very poor and very lame, heard the church bell ring for service. She had not been to church before since childhood, but took it into her head to go this once. The minister preached on the parable of the lost sheep, and to this poor old woman his words conveyed real and joyful news. She sat drinking it in as a traveler drinks at a well in the desert, to save his very life. "What," said she to herself, "be I then a sinner? Yes, surely I be. What, be I then just like the lost sheep? Aye,

for sure, I'm just like that. And be there a shepherd searching about for me? Will he find me? Be I worth his while? A Saviour for a poor thing like me! 'Tis wonderful loving." These were her self-communions as she hobbled back on her crutches to the little dark cellar which she called home. A short time afterward the clergyman received a message that the poor old woman was dying and earnestly desired to see him. The moment he made his appearance she exclaimed: "That is the man who told me about the lost sheep. I want to know more about it." So he sat down, saying, "I will gladly tell you more about it. I will tell you also about the sheep that was found." And as the minister went on telling and illustrating the beautiful story the poor, confused, and trembling soul was found of the loving Shepherd of Calvary, and with happy face she exclaimed, "Found! Found! Found!" She did not live very long after this interview, and she passed away with those precious words on her dying lips: "Found! Found! Found!"

The shepherd, if he be a true shepherd, will not stay away from his search because the sheep that is lost is little or young, or is old or thin or weak. It is one of his flock that is lost, and he is a shepherd and will save it. So the Lord Jesus Christ comes

out from the heart of God to seek after the lost ones, wherever they are and whoever they are. Among those whom Jesus sought when he was on earth were Joseph and Nicodemus and the Roman centurion among the rich and the powerful, but he sought also among the fishermen who were poor and rude and unlettered. He sought among the politicians and the hated taxgatherers for Zacchæus and Matthew. He sought after lost women who were in shame and disgrace. He sought after wicked and thieving men, and the very last thing he did before he gave up his life on the cross was to bring home a poor thief, forgiven and redeemed. If there be one here who has failed so many times in the effort to do right as to have lost hope, I want you to take comfort and be assured that it is not in your wisdom or your strength to find the way home; but you are to depend upon the wisdom and strength of the Good Shepherd. No matter how often you have tried and failed, the Shepherd will not cast you off because of that. It is said that Lady Huntingdon once approached George Whitefield with a party of ladies and said to him: "These ladies have been preferring a very heavy charge against you. They say that in your sermon last night you made use of this expression: 'So ready is Christ to receive sinners who come to him that he

is willing to receive the devil's castaways.' ” Mr. Whitefield pleaded guilty to the charge, and told them this story. Said he: “A wretched woman came to me this morning and said: ‘Sir, I was passing the door of your chapel, and, hearing the voice of some one preaching, I did what I have never been in the habit of doing, I went in! And one of the first things I heard you say was that Jesus would receive willingly the devil's castaways. Sir, I have been serving the devil for many years, and am so worn out in his service that I may with truth be called one of the devil's castaways. Do you think that Jesus would receive me?’ I,” said Mr. Whitefield, “assured her that there was not a doubt of it, if she was willing to go to him.” Lady Huntingdon was so impressed with the story that she hunted up the woman, and found that it had indeed been a most glorious conversion, and she ever afterward lived in happy communion with the flock of God.

But, after all, the sheep will have something to do about its rescue, even when the shepherd has found it. I can imagine a sheep being so silly as to leap over the precipice, or flee from the shepherd into the very jaws of the wolf, and certainly we are constantly seeing men and women who flee from the loving search for their salvation. It is possible to sin against God's love and refuse to be

saved. But, O, the folly of it, and the pity of it! Some of you have been the cause of many prayers, and perhaps even now you know of some one who is praying for you, and yet you do not yield. Would you like to have them stop praying? Would you be satisfied to feel that there was nobody on earth who was trying to save you from your lost condition and bring you home to heaven? I shall never forget a young man who came to me one day and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "My mother is dead! My mother is dead! And who will pray for me now?" His mother had been praying for him for years, and he had hardened his heart against it; but now that she was dead his heart broke, and before the grass had grown green over her grave her prayers were answered.

Bishop Ninde, who went home to heaven so lately, among the last things that he did wrote a little story of Dr. Albert S. Hunt when he was a professor in Wesleyan University at Middletown, Conn. Professor Hunt was a great soul-winner, and there was one young man in the school in whom he was greatly interested. One day he dismissed his classes all day and shut himself up in his room and spent the day in agonizing appeals to God for the conversion of this young man. In the evening he sought his friend and with a tender-

ness born of earnest concern for his soul begged him to surrender himself to Christ. The young man, instead of yielding to his persuasions, seemed more unconcerned and frivolous than usual. With hope well-nigh broken, Hunt exclaimed, "Othman, I believe I shall have to give you up!" There was passionate despair in the exclamation. The countenance of the young man instantly changed. With a strange seriousness of voice and look he cried out, "O, don't give me up!" And that was the dawning of a new life to him. He yielded himself to be carried back on the shepherd's shoulders.

Thank God, you can come now. This very hour you may settle the question for all eternity.

Once at Hamilton Camp Meeting, a few miles out of Boston, a man was urged to go to the altar and seek the forgiveness of his sins.

He replied: "I have no time. I am an engineer and must go and pull my train out in ten minutes."

"O, that is plenty of time to get converted," said the other. "Come along."

He did, and was gloriously converted, and pulled his train out on time.

O brother, sister, the heavenly Shepherd is calling. In God's name, surrender yourself to him now!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PEOPLE WHO ARE MOTH-EATEN

The moth shall eat them up.—*Isaiah* 1, 9.

THIS is a unique, concise, and picturesque description of how some people in olden time came to their destruction. It was a sort of contemptuous way of describing the insignificant character of their enmity and their opposition. They were not to be taken into account as enemies who needed to be fought with sword and battle-ax or with spear or javelin. No, the moths would take care of them. This was another way of saying that there were certain insidious causes at work among themselves, in their own hearts and lives—certain habits and conditions as quiet and still and noiseless as a moth—that would yet eat their hearts out, and they would fall to pieces like a splendid garment which has been silently cut and scissored by the moths.

Some sins we are constantly warned against because they work largely in the open. They are like the paw of the lion; they leave their mark, and every man who sees the slain knows who the enemy was. If a herd of elephants passes through a rice

field, in those lands where these huge beasts abound, no one needs to be told who has passed that way; but the little dwarfs in the heart of the great forest set their tiny stabbing spears among the leaves, and the wounded man may not know of the deadly poison that has entered his blood until it is too late for help. So there are some sins that are blatant; they are recognized at once. The man who is tempted by them knows readily that he is tempted of the devil, and that he is in danger of the loss of his soul; but other sins are like the hidden stab with its poisoned covering that we step on unseen. There are sins like the malaria that floats off from stagnant water; sins like the moth millers, white, soft, noiseless, and delicate, that lay their eggs in the secret places of the imagination; they are to be mused about and brooded over in many a quiet hour until they hatch out moral moths, silent and noiseless like their mother, but with teeth as sharp and vicious as Satan's, which will cut the holy fabric of character and leave it useless as a moth-eaten garment.

Let us look at some of these moths. One of them is *indolence*. Everything that God has made in this world is for use and service. When a thing will not serve it begins to decay and becomes a nuisance to itself and a danger to its neighbors.

There are no exceptions to this great truth. You may see it illustrated everywhere. Take an old dwelling house that no longer shelters the life of a family. How quick the bats find it out and make their nests in the cellar. The wasps will have a nest somewhere, and all sorts of bugs and ugly and loathsome little beasts will find their home in hidden corners until that indolent house becomes a breeding place of loathsomeness and danger. An indolent garden given over to weeds and neglect goes to ruin the same way. Around its walls is a favorite nesting place for snakes, and every man accustomed to it, who goes about an old neglected farmhouse or garden, watches warily for snakes that lie in wait with deadly fang to resent the approach of the intruder.

These are fair illustrations of what comes to pass in an idle, indolent life. Man was made for work, for exercise, for service; and when he ceases to serve and is given over to indolence the moths begin to work on him. The old proverb, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop," or the other one, "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do," are both true. And yet many get into habits of indolence without feeling that they are sinners. This is peculiarly true of indolence of the mind. Once reading and serious thoughtfulness is broken up for a time by

business or pleasure, and one gets out of the habit of doing a daily stipend of good faithful reading or of holding the mind to honest, straightforward thinking on the important themes of life, he is in danger of intellectual indolence. Little by little one ceases to read and ceases to meditate and think with any decisive, earnest purpose. The mind becomes moth-eaten and sluggish and useless; and yet such a sinner, who has so grievously sinned against God and his own soul, scarcely recognizes that he has sinned.

Do not forget that an indolent mind in youth and middle age means terrible punishment in old age. A distinguished bishop presiding at a Conference of colored ministers in the South had his fancy taken by a fine-looking man sitting in the audience, and asked the secretary of the Conference about him. The secretary spoke rather contemptuously of the man, and the bishop said, "You surely do not understand who I mean. I mean that fine-looking, baldheaded man on the middle aisle." The reply was, O yes, bishop, that's the man I mean, too. The trouble is, his head is bald inside as well as outside."

Now, it is a terrible thing to be baldheaded on the inside when you come to get old. Thorwaldsen, the sculptor, made a bas-relief in which a feeble old

man is holding out impotent hands to try to catch the little mocking doves that are flying away from him. Youth at its poorest has its dovecote well filled with things that interest the mind and heart; but if you are going on to old age without finding your dovecote empty you must conquer the indolence of mind and heart which tempts you to idleness and inaction.

A bright writer commenting on the attempt to make provision for old age, wisely says that the best kind of provision and the most needful is too often neglected. An old age that comes to a person who has always lived in externals is inevitably sad. The withered beauty and the aged fop, who still pose and make believe, are melancholy as a death's-head. Painted old age is a horrible sight, and yet more pathetic than horrible. It speaks of vacuity and emptiness. How passionately these people have sought the elixir of life, and yet of how little value any part of life has been to them!

Old age is supremely sad to those who have not learned to think, to find entertainment and reinvigoration in the powers of the intellect. And nothing will give new impulse to one's thoughts along the lines that make for peace and comfort to the soul so much as to stir into activity your mind in the service of God and of his children. The

people who rouse themselves out of indolence to think thoughts and realize them in helpfulness to others save themselves from being moth-eaten as the years grow on. It was a very old man who said as he was nearing the end on earth that he was "sorry to go out of the world leaving so much misery in it." Though more than fourscore years had passed over his head, the world to him had not lost its charm, because he had spent his life making sad hearts happy and in helping to lessen the misery which he found.

Then there is the moth of *self-indulgence*. I do not mean that gross self-indulgence of strong drink which leads to drunkenness, which everybody can see and which rings a bell before it to attract attention to the victim's shame. Neither do I mean that yielding to unholy lusts which binds the soul to deadly immorality. I mean those soft and gentle and insidious indulgences which most people seem to regard as permissible, and which are more or less temptations to all of us. They are not glaring; they are not regarded as specially sinful, and yet multitudes are destroyed by them. Strong men who are masters of the world in many respects have been themselves mastered by very little moths that have silently and secretly cut the threads of their strength. Napoleon Bonaparte, the greatest single

human force of his day, was but a little past middle age when he died at St. Helena. The doctor who knew him best said his disease was brought about by excessive snuffing. Think of it! The hero of Austerlitz, the man who could make all Europe tremble by one emphatic stamp of his foot, killed at the prime of his life by a snuffbox! And there are men all around us, and women, too, who are being slain, and who will die a living death, taking ten or fifteen years to die, during which time the body will be full of aches and pains because of self-indulgence in eating and drinking or irregularities of sleeping which are cutting all the strength out of life's fabric.

The worst thing about self-indulgence is not, however, that it destroys the garment of the body; it also feeds on the garment of the soul. It comes to be the soul's master. Little habits, soft and silken as the moth miller, grow up in us, until they master us and control us and make it impossible for us to do the self-sacrificing, courageous work for God and men which we ought to do. Jesus Christ is our model. He pleased not himself. He came not to be ministered to, but to be a minister to others; and we must be on the alert lest we be destroyed by the moth of self-indulgence.

There is another moth, I think not often spoken

of, which we might call *self-pity*. It is a species of self-indulgence, but of such a different type from what is commonly regarded under that name. That it is perhaps well to consider it alone. Robert Louis Stevenson, in one of his fascinating books of travel, tells of the marvelous impression produced upon his mind by listening to the wail of the *Miserere* in a Continental cathedral. "I take it," he said, "to be the composition of an atheist." Stevenson suggests in this judgment an important truth that the deliberate rehearsal of all the miseries and agonies of men must inevitably cultivate in them the feeling of self-pity, with an underlying insinuation that they have been hardly used and that life is a dismal matter at its best.

Now this self-pity destroys multitudes of souls. Robert Louis Stevenson, of all men, had the right to speak on this subject. Smitten down with a deadly disease just at the beginning of his career, he resolutely refused to pity himself or to give up, and fought his fight, traveling from land to land, maintaining always his cheerfulness and his faith, and during those years of illness producing work of great service and helpfulness to the world. And yet the greatest thing he produced was his own personality. He showed the whole world a young man slowly wasting away in body and yet always cheer-

ful, happy, courageous, doing splendid work, never pitying himself, going toward the future with a "morning face."

Beware of this little moth that comes to you in sickness or misfortune in the time of adversity. It is like the mosquitoes that come off the swamps; it is specially born of adverse circumstances, and its tendency is to make you morbid, to make you feel that God has not used you well, and there is not much use for you to struggle against your fate. Listen to that tempter and it will cut your throat. There is every reason for you to struggle, and there is every victory before you, if you struggle with honest heart and simple reliance upon God.

There is a cape at the southern point of Africa which the old sailors used to call the Cape of Storms. It had a bad name. They had to fight their way around it through high waves and fierce tempests for many days before they entered the peaceful seas which lay beyond. But after a while there came a jolly tar, a brave and hopeful man, who looked at it on the other side, and who, when he had mastered the storms and adverse winds, and rounded the cape, called it the Cape of Good Hope. All through the stormy days he did not take most account of the water through which he was passing, but thought most of the sea toward which he was

sailing, and the world joined with him. So the Cape of Storms was forgotten and the Cape of Good Hope it is for all time. My friend, you at whose heart that devilish little moth, self-pity, is gnawing, I beg of you to cast it out. You are not to be pitied. You are the child of God. Jesus Christ died to redeem you, and he ever lives to intercede for you. Pick up your courage. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

There is one other little moth, very insidious and very deadly, which I must speak of for a moment. It is the moth of *carelessness* or *neglect*. It is strange that people should congratulate themselves that somehow they are less sinners to simply neglect to do their duty than to deliberately refuse to do it, when the result is exactly the same. If a man neglects to eat the effect on his body is just as bad as if he refuses to eat. If a man is overboard, drowning, and I neglect to throw him the lifeline, he will drown just the same as if I had refused to do it. There are many people who were brought up in Christian homes, and who have all their lives been to a great extent in touch with Christian influences, who are in great danger and peril

of going down to endless night because of that little deadly moth of neglect which is destroying for them the garment of salvation. You never said you would not be a Christian. Indeed, you expect sometime to be a Christian; but you have neglected it through all these years until the habit of neglect has cut deep into the very fabric of your soul. It becomes easier every day that you thus sin against God. I call you now to action! "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

CHAPTER XXVII

DAVID AND LONGFELLOW ON THE MEANING OF
LIFE

THE great poets and the noble artists see wondrous things that others do not behold. A lady, looking at one of Turner's splendid paintings representing the sunset, said, "I never saw that!" to which the artist quietly replied, "No, but don't you wish you could?"

Not only do the poets see truth that is either hidden or vague to others, but they have a way of portraying it which makes it clear and vivid to the eyes of the mind. The next thing to being a poet is the ability to appreciate him and to seize upon the vision which he paints for us in rare and chosen words.

David and Longfellow were great singers. David's greatest song is the one we call the Shepherd Psalm. While I would not say that Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" was his greatest poem, it is perhaps the most popular, and has been of the most inspiration and comfort to the world. Each

of these poems teaches many lessons not found in the other; but together they hold two or three great lessons from which we ought to find comfort and inspiration.

The first thought which suggests itself to me is that both to David and Longfellow life was not a drift without meaning, but was an orderly progress, full of purpose. David thinks of man as a part of a great flock. The hillside was before him, and there were his sheep which he had led with patience and care across the stream, up the trail around the edge of the precipice, carefully going through every little green pasture that would give comfort and refreshment to the flock, and watching lovingly that no danger should come to any one of them. They were not out for a picnic, going any which way. The shepherd knew where he was leading them, and all the day was planned and full of purpose. And so, as he sings about it, taking it as an emblem of God's care, he says:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul."

Longfellow's note is very much more spirited than this. He is not thinking of man as a shepherd

thinks of a flock, but there is the same teaching that human life is an intense, real thing and is to be taken seriously. Man is in a procession, he is advancing; he must grow, he must act with all his might, for great possibilities are within his reach. Our poet sings:

"Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

"Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day."

Both of our poets see God with clear eyes as the great saving background of human life. Man may hope, he may have confidence, he may go forward with composure, he may do his work with a trusting heart because God is watching over him and, if he will yield himself to him, will take hold of his hand and guide him safely through all the journey. Whether we are rich or poor, whether

we are feeble or strong, whether we are famous or obscure—all these are only incidents of the journey and have little to do with the great end toward which we are traveling. Old age may come upon us. The house in which we live may become broken and inadequate to the storms. The shadows of the valley may shut in around us. But the stars will still shine in the sky overhead, and the God in whose bosom the stars are jewels will come down and walk with us in the shadows as a shepherd walks with his sheep. Death will lead to life, and the evening shadows will only be a promise and a pledge of the great sunrise toward which we are traveling. The note of faith and of absolute assurance with which these poets sing is very comforting. David says:

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Longfellow, too, is not unmindful that man’s march must mean the grave. But he also catches hope in the thought of God and feels the blood bound within him with inspiration and courage. He sings:

"Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!"

In both of these poems there is sounded a note that is of the greatest importance as a message for our own time. The message is that we should live in the present in the sense that we should do our whole duty to-day and get all the comfort and blessing that to-day holds for us rather than thrust aside both duties and enjoyments of the nobler sort into some far-off imaginary period which may never come to us, or, if it does come, will find us unfitted for them. Many a man has slaved all his life to become rich, imagining that after a while, when he has plenty of money, he will build him a splendid library, buy all the great books, fill a gallery with beautiful pictures, and settle down for years to enjoy them. But such a man, who has been what the world calls successful, and has made his money and bought his library and his books and his pictures, has found that there has gone from him forever all power to appreciate and enjoy his rare

treasures. An hour a day spent in reading and in the enjoyment of art during all these years would not only have refreshed and enriched his soul for the later years, but would have been like a cup of cold water every day of his life.

The saddest tragedy of this sort is in family life. A man thinks that the time will come when he can make up to his wife and children and friends for all the days when he has not had time to show them his love and affection. Alas, when the time comes the children have grown up, and like birds that fly out from the nest they are gone from him. The wife has silenced her affection so long that if he were disposed to show any now it would be awkward to them both. The friends who might have been the richest treasures of his life have dropped away into mere acquaintanceship. My friends, we cannot afford to fail in seizing the new, fresh joys and blessings which God means to give us through the love and fellowship of every day. Take them now. They are not for to-morrow. The to-morrow will take care of itself. The Lord's mercies are "new every morning."

And in that highest realm of the spirit there could be no message more important. Is it not true that many are living in a very unsatisfactory grade of spiritual life who expect sometime to do better?

Just now you are so busy, and you have so many other things to occupy your mind, that you excuse yourself from doing your full duty as a member of the Church of God. Occasionally you read the story of some sweet saint, completely surrendered to the Spirit of God, and you are both humbled and fascinated by it. You are ashamed that your own life comes so far short of the goodness and the rapture seen in the saint, and at the same time it charms you because deep down in your soul there is something that rises up and says, "It is possible for me, by the grace of God, the fellowship of Jesus Christ, and the living presence of the Holy Spirit to live a life as beautiful and glorious as that." But you do not live that way. Your life goes on, humdrum and selfish and fretful and so unsatisfactory to yourself. The secret of all the trouble is that you are putting off for the future what you ought to do here and now. All the mercy of God is for to-day. All the bread of life, all the rich spiritual delicacies that were ever fed to any soul, are for you here and now. Open your heart and consecrate your life to receive everything that heaven has to give to human souls. That you may be sure I am right about this message, listen again to these great lines of David:

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The same note—doing the work of to-day that both for ourselves and our neighbor we may make the present a fit godfather for the future—sounds with a still more live and energetic touch from the harp of Longfellow:

"Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

"Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

"Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE EASTER EXPERIENCES OF MARY MAGDALENE

She . . . saith unto him, Sir.—*John* xx, 15. (Rev. Ver.)

She . . . saith unto him . . . Master.—*John* xx, 16. (Rev. Ver.)

Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord.—*John* xx, 18. (Rev. Ver.)

THE earthquake had already shaken open the sepulcher in Joseph's garden, the angel had rolled away the stone from the mouth of the tomb which had been holding the body of Jesus, and the guard of soldiers set to keep Christ in his grave had fled away frightened into the city. Then it was that Mary Magdalene, while it was yet dark, before the dawn had broken into day, came to the sepulcher, and when she saw that the stone was taken away she was greatly excited and ran as fast as she could to where John and Peter were staying and exclaimed to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him." It took no second appeal to attract the attention of these two men. They hurried away, leaving the worn-out woman to come behind. As they proceeded they became more aroused, and

both of them ran on their way to the sepulcher. John outran Peter, and came first to the grave. He did not enter it, however, but paused at the mouth of the open tomb, a sort of solemn timidity taking possession of him. But when Peter came up he went immediately into the grave and examined everything, and afterward John followed him, and became thoroughly convinced that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead.

Peter and John, after thoroughly examining the place, went away thoughtfully to their home to talk the matter over together, but Mary did not go with them. Her heart clung to the spot where she had last seen the body of Jesus. She stood weeping outside the tomb. How many women have stood outside the tomb since, feeling that it was the most sacred place on earth to them, and have thus entered into that fellowship of tears with Mary Magdalene.

Finally, still weeping, Mary stooped down and looked into the tomb again, and was amazed to see two angels clothed in shining white, the one sitting at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. And as she gazed upon them one of them spoke to her and said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" And she said unto them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know

not where they have laid him." Just then something attracted her attention and she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, but did not at first recognize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, repeating the question of the angels, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" And Mary, supposing he was the man who had charge of the garden in which was the sepulcher, said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Something touched the heart of Jesus and caused him to reveal himself to her. It may have been the despairing attitude, or the look of utter loneliness and loss in her face, or those tender words showing the depth of her devotion for him—that sort of hopeless love which made her long to find the poor dead body, as if that were all there was left of her Lord; or it may have been also a feeling of loss in Christ's own heart, when she who had been accustomed to meet him so gratefully and tenderly now addressed him in those formal tones and in that cold word, "Sir." How often our address to Christ is so cold and formal and ceremonious that Christ must feel that there is no loving appreciation or tender recognition in it! For whatever reason, Christ determined to relieve this suffering heart of its loneliness and depression, and with, I have

no doubt, a smile of infinite compassion and love, and a tone that was electric, going to her very heart, Jesus spoke to her one word ; but that word was her own name and uttered with a voice and with a look that she could never misunderstand.

“Mary,” said Jesus, and at that she turned herself, with an exclamation of astonishment, and cried out, “Rabboni!” This title existed in the Jewish schools under a threefold form: Rab, *master*, the lowest degree of honor; Rabbi, *my master*, of higher dignity; Rabboni, *my great master*, the most honorable of all, publicly given, we are told, to only seven persons, all of the school of Hillel and of great eminence. So we can easily picture the scene as Mary excitedly throws up her hands and turning away from the tomb starts toward the Lord as though she would fall at his feet and embrace them, and cries out in an exclamation of relief and love, “My great Master!” His recent death, the strange experiences of the last days, the mystery and the awe that surrounded the occasion, the angels she had just seen, and the fact that she had but just spoken to Christ and not recognized him, the confusion of her mind as to what this wonderful resurrection could mean—all this explains why even now she does not use a tenderer word in addressing Jesus. But the great longing of her

heart is in that sentence, and in the attitude, as she throws herself down to embrace the feet of the Saviour.

At first glance it seems very strange to us that Christ should have met that offered embrace with a seemingly cold refusal. He had not met her so when she had poured the ointment on his head and had washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. There had been words of sweetest comfort and blessing then, and he had defended her right to love him and minister to him before those hard critical eyes which had been fastened on her in contemptuous gaze, and before all at the dinner table had borne testimony to her forgiveness and had spoken of the depth of her love and devotion in tender, sympathetic words that had been to her bruised heart like showers of rain to a withered, thirsty plant. But now, when her weeping for him has led him to reveal himself and she falls on her knees to embrace his feet—the very feet she had covered with tears and kisses that day of the feast—Christ is turning her away and saying, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.”

But cold as it seems at first glance, as we study

do we not see its wisdom and its tenderness as well? Christ is saying to Mary Magdalene, "There will be time enough to embrace me, but let us not forget now those poor, wounded hearts yonder among my disciples and your friends. They are just as anxious as you are and they do not know yet that I am risen. They do not understand, and I will make you my messenger. Go and tell them that the great God in heaven is not only my Father but yours and theirs, and comfort their hearts with the certainty that I have come off victorious over death and the grave." And Mary seems to have understood, for she hurries away to the disciples. And I want you to take notice that when she comes to them she uses a different term in speaking about Jesus. She no longer talks about "the Master," but it is now "the Lord." With glowing, exalted face, and an air of one who has been in heaven, she comes in among them and says, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she proceeds to give them at length and in detail the message of Christ to them. By sending Mary on this errand of mercy to his disciples Christ put the crown on self-denying service for others. And there is in it the assurance for us that it is often more acceptable to the heart of Christ for us to be carrying comfort and good cheer to those who are perplexed and in trouble and need

than to be embracing Christ on our knees in prayer in our own homes.

And what a sweet message it was that Mary had to carry to the disciples—the recognition of their brotherhood with Christ, the assurance of their inner personal sonship to God. Christ had said many loving things to them before. Just a little while before his arrest he had assured them of his friendship and had said to them, “Ye are my friends, and if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” But he comes closer than this to them now, and assures them that they are a part of his family, his Father is their Father, he is the Elder Brother who will look after their inheritance and care for their interests in heaven, and he will intrust his interests on earth to them, and they shall stand in his place and represent him before men. They shall be known as the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. How sweet is the precious message that Mary carried that first Easter morning! And it has not lost any of its sweetness through the lapse of the ages. It comes to us with just as much tenderness and sweetness as to them. How honored we are, how exalted,

to have this privilege of brotherhood with Jesus Christ. Sometimes men go to a great deal of trouble to trace out their relationship to some lofty personage, and take great comfort out of the fact that though they have never accomplished any great thing themselves they are brother or sister to one who has so served the world as to receive great honor; they feel that the whole family have been honored in him. But the highest possible honor that can come in the way of relationship can come to the very poorest and most sinful man or woman in the world who will accept it.

Mr. Spurgeon thinks it is a very significant fact that Christ should have made Mary Magdalene his message-bearer to the disciples on Easter morning, and should thus have so honored one who had been so great a sinner. Mary Magdalene had fallen very low. It was out of her that Christ cast seven devils. Luther used to say of her, "So many devils, so many sins." But, poor sinner though she had been, she now had become an honored saint. It was just like Jesus to appear to her first. It was just like our divine Lord and in perfect harmony with his mission to the world that he should have given most honor to the one among his intimate friends who had had the most sin. When Jesus takes a sinner to himself, he does not hold him at

arm's length. Ah, no; he takes him into his very heart and home, and so completely forgives all previous sin that the very chief of sinners may become the most honored of his disciples and friends. Christ's treatment of Mary Magdalene should comfort anyone who after years of indifference and sin has at last seen the folly and wickedness of such a life and has come full of repentance to the Saviour. Take the comfort of it to your soul. Though you will always regret that you stayed away from Christ so long, yet when you notice this Easter tenderness of Jesus to Mary Magdalene you must feel that Christ will not hold up the past against you, but that if you are loving and true to him, as Mary was, he will be true to you, and will honor you, and give you his friendship, and own you in heaven forever.

But I imagine that Mr. Spurgeon is right when he believes that Mary was selected to see Christ first for still another reason, and that was because she loved most. John loved Jesus much, but Mary loved him better; John went away when he saw an empty sepulcher, but Mary stood without and wept. Love is keen-eyed. They say love is blind. In one sense it is true; but there never were such good eyes as those which love can carry in its head. Love will look after Jesus, and discover him where none

else can. If I set the unloving heart to read a chapter in the Bible it finds no Jesus there. But when the loving heart takes up that same chapter Christ's face is in every paragraph. A critical scholar may read a psalm and see no Messiah there, but an enthusiastic lover of Jesus will see glimpses of his glory everywhere. If you want to see Jesus, and have daily sweet visions of his glory, you must love him. You must seek him as Mary did. "Seek him in the darkness and the twilight, seek him when the sun is risen, seek him at the tomb before the stone is rolled away; you must seek him when you behold that the stone is gone; you must seek him in the hollow tomb; you must seek him in the garden; you must seek him in life; you must seek him in death," and then, the more diligent you are in seeking, the more frequently Christ will manifest himself to you and the more keenly you will rejoice on finding him. Mary went forth bearing precious seeds; she went forth weeping, but she returned to the disciples rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her, for it was a rich and happy message she had for them. She had sown tears when she went out to seek her Lord, but all her tears were full of joy when she came back from her visit with him. And the happiness that Mary Magdalene knew is within the

reach of everyone who will love Christ as she did. Love is the crowning grace of the Christian life. Some one sings of Hope and Faith and Love, but gives the crown, as Paul did, to Love:

"A magic boat I saw afloat
On the stormy sea of life;
With pure, bright brow a child at the prow
Steered through the raging strife.

"And 'mid the storm that cherub form
Sang clearly, ceasing never:
'Bright Hope will sail through the fiercest gale
On the sea of life forever!'

"The boat sped on; the day was gone;
Dark clouds that child surrounded;
Yet like a star it shone afar
As it ever onward bounded.

"And higher grown, its altered tone
Sang firmly, faltering never:
'Faith steers aright, through the blackest night,
On the sea of life forever.'

"Through perils dark that magic bark
To its heavenly haven bounded;
And the child, full grown, like an angel shone,
Its brow with a crown surrounded.

"And high it sung with seraph tongue,
Its music ceasing never:
'Love, shining bright, is the highest light
On the sea of life forever.'"

There seems to me to be something significant

in the three terms which Mary Magdalene used to designate Jesus on Easter morning. The three titles are, "Sir," "Master," "Lord." Those are the three steps by which Mary mounted to supreme gladness in the consciousness of Christ's resurrection and to joyous confidence in her risen Lord. She called him "Sir" when he was simply a stranger to her. She thought he was the gardener or some one who might give her information about what she wanted to know. It was a title of formal ceremony. And are there not those on this Easter evening who stand in just that relation to Jesus? You have heard about Christ all your life, you believe in him as an historical character and as a great influential factor in the history of the world. But if you were to speak to him you could not honestly go beyond that term "Sir." As you stand to-day that would be the only appropriate title on your lips in addressing Jesus; but how unsatisfactory that is! Such an attitude toward Jesus can never be any comfort in the great trials and sorrows of life. You cannot stand beside the coffin of your dead loved ones and get any comfort from Jesus if you cannot come closer to him than that. Easter, after all, is a cold, meaningless festival to you unless Christ is known to you by some dearer name.

Then there was the next title, "My great Master." That was wrung from Mary's lips as she began to realize that it was Jesus and that he was risen from the dead. But in her confusion and perplexity the old tender relation which she had held toward him seemed impossible; he was Master, he was Rabbi, he was Teacher, he held destiny in his hands, she could not live without him, but her poor bruised heart had not gathered its confidence yet, so as to bring her into a still closer relation to Christ than she had ever known. I imagine that some who hear me are in that position. You are trying to be Christians and you worship Christ, and yet you do not love him with the tenderness and devotion of which you are capable.

But it is only a step from where you stand to joy and gladness unutterable, and I pray God that you may take that step now. As Mary walked away, hurrying homeward to tell the disciples the wonderful message Christ had given her, everything fell into its proper place. She was the daughter of God, she was the sister of Jesus Christ; Christ was risen from the dead, he would live forever; he was not only her Lord, but he was Lord over all, and he loved and honored her. And so it was with love and devotion indescribable that she came into the presence of her friends and said with

a hushed voice, "I have seen the Lord." Ah, thank God, many another heart has come to Easter morning with all the gloom and sorrow and heartbreak of sickness and death and the grave, mourning their loved ones as having been overcome and swallowed up by the grim monster, who have been able to say after the blessed visions of the Easter day, "I have seen the Lord."

Christ is still revealing himself to men and women, and he longs to reveal himself to every one of us. You may be sure, if in your inmost heart at this moment you are seeking him sorrowing, that if you will listen in the hush of your soul you will hear him call your name, as he did that of Mary at the dawn of the first Easter day. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," says Jesus. That is to you, and if you will open the door of your heart the Easter glory may crown all the years to come.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE EASTER EARTHQUAKE

There was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.—*Matthew xxviii, 2.*

THE trouble with the wrongdoer is that he never can get to the end of the wrong that it seems necessary to do in order to make good his case. If a man tells one lie he tells another to get out of it, and then only gets the deeper into the mire. His falsehoods draw him the deeper into the meshes of insecurity. So it is with all sin, with all insincerity, with all shams and frauds, and with all who place themselves out of harmony and out of touch with the right. The people who had followed Jesus with malignant hatred to his death are good illustrations of this truth. They thought if they could get rid of Christ by having him crucified they would be able to rest in peace. He had come into their midst a very disturbing factor. He had uncovered the hypocrisy and worthless formality of their lives. They hated him and thought if they could get him put to death judicially it would be

the end of his disturbing prophecies and sermons, and everything would settle down into the old quiet again. But they no sooner had accomplished the death of Jesus on the cross than they were worried about another trouble, and that was a fear that he would not remain dead. The next day after the crucifixion and his burial in Joseph's tomb the chief priests and Pharisees went together to Pilate, and they said: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." Pilate, who had permitted himself to be a party to the crucifixion of Christ against his own will and judgment in order to please these people, was not likely to draw back now and make difficulties when, as he looked at it, the guard could make no difference to anybody. So he ordered for them the watch and said, "Go your way, make it as sure as ye can." So they went and did their work thoroughly. They set a seal on the stone, the seal of the Roman government, to break which was a crime punishable with death, and they set a strong guard to watch the sealed tomb day and night.

What a strange situation! It is not uncommon to leave watchers with a man to keep him from dying, to keep him alive, but in all the history of the race this is the only occasion on record where a guard was set about a man to keep him dead. And it failed. For the time passed by, and that long Saturday night slipped away at last, and as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week a great earthquake shook the ground. The garden, the tomb, the guard, swayed to and fro like a drunken man. But that was not all; if it had been, even if the stone had rolled from its place at the door, that stout Roman guard would not have fled. Those old veteran soldiers from Gaul knew their business better than that. Besides, earthquakes were not an uncommon occurrence in that land. As Dr. Wright of Oberlin College says, Palestine is a region where earthquakes are easily gotten up. The whole valley of the Jordan and of the Dead Sea has been formed by a succession of earthquakes. There was an earthquake on the day of Christ's crucifixion, an earthquake so great and important that in the earthquake catalogue compiled by the British Association it is recorded as scientifically verified by evidence entirely independent of the Bible account. And yet we do not read that anyone deserted his post on that account.

No, an earthquake alone would never have sent those soldiers fleeing into the city like skulking cowards. But in the midst of that earthquake shock something else happened far more significant. As they rocked to and fro they saw an angel descending from heaven, a mighty angel, with countenance like lightning and with raiment as white as snow, and it was for fear of him that the soldiers began to shake and fell like dead men, and became so thoroughly frightened that as soon as they could control themselves enough to run they fled into the city. There was not a man in all the land who would have dared to break that Roman seal, but the earthquake and the angel, both of them God's messengers, had no respect for the seal of Rome, and they burst it asunder, and the angel rolled back the stone from the sepulcher and sat on it.

What message has the Easter earthquake for us on this new Easter morning? First, it suggests the victory of light over darkness. There is no night so dark but the dawn will follow. The day is stronger than the night. The sun has not withdrawn from the world even in the night; it is the earth that has rolled away from the day. But it will come back again, and the sunshine will be as warm and beautiful as ever. It was a long night to

the disciples, and to all those friends of Jesus, for they scarcely dared to hope that there was anything better for them than a chance to bring spices to make fragrant his tomb. But the night ended, and the dawn came, and with it all the wonderful visions and glories of that first Easter day. Are any of us passing through the night? Is the darkness about us?—darkness so dense, it may be, that it reminds us of that Egyptian darkness that could be felt? Even then let us sorrow not as others who have no hope, for we are living in the glorious days of the Easter Gospel, and He who brought the light to the first Easter morning has power to disperse the darkness that surrounds us and warm our hearts and inspire us with the light of Easter day.

Again, nothing can stand against our Christ. He can use even earthquakes and angels to help along his victory. What a silly thing to think a few soldiers could hold Christ in the grave when he was able to summon to his aid the great volcanic forces of nature and to call legions of angels from the skies! So let me encourage you to hope, though your happiness seem to have been buried in a grave of hewn stone and the great rock at the mouth is so cemented into its place and so sealed by all the force of human power that joy never can break out from its tomb and you can never open the way to it

again. That is just what Peter and John and the Marys thought. But see how mistaken they were. True, no human power was able to help them, but they were not dependent upon human power. The very earth beneath and the invisible but none the less real power of the heavens above were working together to defeat the foes of God, and to comfort and console the friends of Jesus Christ. And does not Paul say to us, "All things work together for good to them that love God"? Why, then, shall we spend sleepless nights and wet our pillows with hopeless tears?—we, who are disciples of the resurrection Lord, who are the followers of the risen Christ, who are the soldiers of Him who liveth and who is alive for evermore. It is unworthy of our Lord that we should go on in a gloomy way and not trust him to roll back the stone from our buried joys and bring to us the Easter glory which shall rightly crown our lives.

We ought to get courage out of this study. Difficulties face some of us that we do not have the power in ourselves to overcome. Indeed, to some of us the difficulties seem to enlarge while our power to struggle seems to decrease. Perhaps your work looms up heavier and your strength does not seem equal to the task. The burden of responsibility and care seems to be growing with the years,

while your strength becomes more uncertain. And so as you face the future you are saying to yourself, as the women said as they came on their loving mission to the tomb where Jesus had been buried, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" It seemed very real to them, that difficulty. They knew that they were not strong enough to do it themselves, and unless they could find some kind friend who would help them they would be unable to lay their sweet and fragrant gifts at the feet of their dead Lord. But how much better was God to them than all their fears! When they came to the place the great stone was already rolled away from the mouth of the sepulcher, and the angels who were sitting on it spoke to them in kindness and said, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: Lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail." So all their fears proved groundless; that which they feared would be an insurmountable

difficulty had already been rolled away by the combined efforts of the earthquake and the angel. And the very first words they had heard from the angels were words to quiet their fears. So some of us are facing difficulties which seem insurmountable to us, and are going along the way with bowed heads and foreboding hearts, when we ought to so trust God, and so believe in him and in his precious promises to care for us and to do the best for us, that we too shall see visions of angels sitting on the difficulties that we have dreaded. Many of the troubles we fear we shall never meet at all. They will recede and vanish into thin air as we draw near them. Other troubles through which we are passing we shall look back upon, and with the sunshine falling on them we shall be delighted to see the clouds that have seemed so dreadful spanned by God's rainbow of promise. I am not claiming that sorrow is all vague and unreal. I am not claiming that life is not a struggle, and that there are not heavy burdens for human shoulders to carry. But what I do claim is that even Gethsemane and the cross and the tomb in the garden are not separated from God's watchful care and can be reached by God's earthquakes as well as by his angels, and that God is willing to use both, whenever it is necessary, to rescue and comfort his children.

We ought to get rid of our doubts and fears and all our gloom even if it takes an Easter earthquake to accomplish it. Some have come to Easter day bowed down with tender and sacred burdens because they have buried their own loved ones in the grave. But Easter is a precious day for such grief. It speaks of the dawning after the night. It speaks of the angel with the face of lightning, and the white raiment. It speaks of a grave broken open and the dead brought back to life. It speaks of victory over death and of a life which is forever. The disciples never thought about Jesus as having any relation to that grave after Easter. Joseph's tomb was no longer a sacred Mecca to them. They looked on high for their ascended Lord. When Stephen, the first of the Christian martyrs, was being stoned to death, he kneeled down and, looking up to heaven with glowing face, exclaimed, "I see Jesus." And so those of us whose loved ones, dear to our hearts beyond all the power of words to tell, have fallen asleep in Jesus ought not to-day to seek the living among the dead. Let us look on high, for our loved ones are there. The little children whom we lost out of our arms in the midst of the sweet and happy prattle of their childhood, has not Christ said that their angels do always behold the face of the heavenly Father? They are not lost.

They are not neglected. They are in the heart of heaven. They are in the presence of the King. The dear old saints, and the strong and happy youths who have gone before us—they, too, are glorified. They are in a land where there is no night, nor sickness, nor sighing; where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; where there shall be no hunger, nor thirst, nor weariness, nor winter storms; but where they shall rejoice in immortal strength. And we are on the way. We are not marching toward nothingness. We are not staggering on to an endless sleep. We are not making a pilgrimage to the grave. We are the children of the risen Lord. We are on our way to heaven. God help us day by day to so enter into fellowship with our resurrected Saviour and King, to so live in the spirit of Christ and in the atmosphere of the heavenly life, that we shall feel within us the power of his resurrection and shall have the best evidence of all that Christ is risen from the dead in the fact that our own hearts are risen into the higher life.

The psalmist said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." It is to those hills to which we must look for our strength and help, and toward which we must look for rest.

"Hemmed in by the eternal hills,
 Life's pathway through the valley lies,
 And bleak hillside and dizzy peak
 Shut out the brightness of the skies.
 A ceaseless throng this pathway tread,
 One watchword have they and one quest,
 To pass from out the toilsome vale
 To where above the hills is rest.

"With faces to the setting sun,
 We all, perforce, must pass this way.
 For 'neath the tender morning skies,
 Or 'neath the noontide's fervid ray,
 Or when the sunset's crimson glow
 With glory crowns the mountain crest,
 Or quivering moonbeams lie athwart,
 The valley hath no place of rest.

"To mossy bank, or leafy nook,
 Our wandering footsteps oft are led,
 But when we reach its welcome shade,
 A fairer one lies just ahead;
 Thus toiling ever, on and on,
 Hope slowly dying in the breast,
 We learn that always, just beyond
 Our grasp, lies happiness and rest.

"Shortsighted plodders are we all,
 Our vision bounded by earth's hills;
 The shady path by mountain side,
 The flowery summit, too, hath ills,
 But far beyond the loftiest peak,
 Where heaven's blue blends with mountain crest,
 Above earth's sordid cares and aims,
 In heaven, and there alone, is rest.

"A moment's lifting of the veil,
As lifts the mist from mountain dome,
And from the 'palace of the King'
Sweet voices woo the wanderers home;
The faces of our loved and lost
Are smiling welcome from the west,
And down the valley, sweet and clear,
Rings out, 'Above the hills is rest.'"

CHAPTER XXX

THE VISION FROM THE TOWER

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—*Habakkuk* ii, 1.

It was a troublous time, dark with mystery and foreboding. Puzzling questions were in the air, and the prophet was at a loss to know the truth, and so he compares himself in his purpose to be like a sailor who climbs aloft into the rigging, who goes up to the lookout, and with a strong glass peers far away through the mist, scanning the wide waste of waves, looking for a sail or for the cloud of smoke that tells of a passing steamer, or, if he be far north, it may be scanning the horizon for the dangerous glint of an iceberg. He must know the truth, whatever it may be. Or he is like the astronomer who climbs up into the tower of the observatory, and with his farseeing telescope at hand sweeps the heavens in search of stars and worlds and moons and wandering comets. While other men sleep he was never so wide-awake. Some new

star, some traveling world, may come forth suddenly, no one can tell when it will appear, and so he keeps his watch, peering into the great realm of silence and of light, watching for the message.

The prophet had learned the secret of wisdom, a secret which every great searcher after knowledge has come to understand, that if you would be wise you must go alone into your tower and meditate and commune with God. God has messages to speak to us which he cannot convey to us in a crowd. Emerson said, "Let us be silent, that we may hear the whisper of the gods." When the Lord would communicate to Moses the mightiest code of laws the world has ever known—a code upon which every other code has been founded, which has been the quarry from which legislatures and parliaments and congresses have dug the stone for all the laws which have stood the test of time—he took him up to the mountain top, away from the noise and jargon of men, that he might talk to him alone. When he would communicate a great message to Elijah, he led him afar off into a mountain cave, and conversed with him there alone. Where God would reveal his vision to Ezekiel he said to him, "Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee." And when he would give John, the beloved

disciple, the last great vision recorded in the book of Revelation, which was to close the Bible, he sent him off alone to the isle of Patmos. So if we would learn the great messages God has to give us we must go alone and stand upon our tower and watch and wait for the vision.

God speaks to us through nature, in all seasons, but there is certainly no season when he speaks to us with so many voices and illustrates the message in so many colors as in the summer time. To the listening soul the summer world is vocal with the voice of God. The very earth on which we stand speaks to us. The *great hills* and *the mountains* are full of teaching. God thinks much of mountains. Go back through the Old Testament Scriptures, and you will see Mount Moriah, Mount Hermon, Mount Sinai, Mount Ararat, and multitudes of other mountains which lift their rugged summits aloft in them. Jesus was fond of mountains. When he was to have his conversation with Moses and Elias, and be transfigured in the presence of his disciples, he took them up into the quiet of the mountain top.

The mountains stand for lofty ideals and high character. They ought to inspire us to the best things. A man will never rise above his ideals. A man who makes low plans, who in his dreams and

longings for himself is satisfied with ordinary achievement, will never accomplish much. The man who lifts his eye upward, who dreams of great and noble and splendid things for himself to accomplish, is the man who grows and expands as life goes on.

The mountains ought to make men generous and large-hearted and broad-minded. The mountain does not live for itself alone, but it is trustee for the valley. It catches storms that do not reach the valley. Its secret chambers hold huge reservoirs of nourishment which bursts out in springs along its side and ooze down into the canyons and give refreshment to the low lands when the summer is hot and dry. Strong men and women ought to be like that. They ought to grapple with the storms and gather wealth and resource not for themselves alone, but that they may bring comfort and blessing to those who are weaker than themselves.

The woods are God's preachers to us. They teach us how to struggle in close fellowship and competition. They make us to know that it is not good to be alone for life's real work; that while our hours of meditation and communion are essential to us, the vision given us in such hours is intended to be realized in close human fellowship, where we touch shoulders with our fellow-men. It is not the

tree that grows alone out on the edge of the bluff and gets all the storms on its own head that is most beautiful or valuable. Such a tree is gnarled and twisted. To get the most splendid trees you must go into the forest where many of them grow side by side. They have to keep straight because of the near presence of their neighbors. There is a great message in that for us. We are all helped by having a keen sense of responsibility toward our neighbors. I was once driving with the mayor of Boston in the outskirts of the town, when a little barefooted, ragged fellow, not more than five or six years old, looked up from making mud pies, and shouted, "Hello, Mr. Mayor!" The mayor turned to me with a quizzical smile, and said, "You see I have to keep pretty straight, for they all know me." The tree growing in the great forest has to keep pretty straight. If it does not it gets a poke in the ribs by the tree growing next to it. So it is in close fellowship, in close cooperation, thinking of our neighbors and of their needs as we do of our own, that there is developed the strongest and truest manhood and womanhood.

The forests, like the mountains, are full of the spirit of worship. He must be a strange man that can look at a great mountain or stand in the shadow of a giant tree without a feeling of rever-

ence and devotion to the God who reared it. I do not wonder Bryant sang:

"The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them—ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication."

The brooks and the lakes are full of God's teaching. The brook is an emblem of all growth. How tiny at its beginning! Often it is only a few drops oozing out through the wet soil and dropping over a stone. A few feet away other drops join it, and a little farther down still others, until it trickles over the rocks a steady rill. It is so large now that a bird can wet its bill in it and go away happy with song. Farther on it gathers other rills into its bosom, sings over the wedding, gurgles with delight, and makes quite a splash in its tumble over the boulders. The flocks and herds may come now, and it will have plenty to refresh them all. And still on it goes, ever giving away and yet ever growing. It keeps itself fresh and clean and pure by constant activity. It does not stop to stagnate; it plunges on and on, ever alive, ever advancing.

Let us learn the lesson of the brook. We must grow as the brook grows. We must not despise the day of small things. We, too, must not expect to become large by hoarding our water of life. We must be always giving if we would be always receiving. We, too, must keep pure and wholesome by constant activity and progress.

But the brook flows into the lake, and the lake is not without its message. For the lake, no matter how large it is, is only a reservoir on the way to the river and the sea. The lake is not stagnant; there are many little brooks that flow into it, but it has its outlet forever tugging at its heart and carrying its streams away toward lower and larger lakes beyond, till it reaches the river, and then on with the swirling current toward the great sea. What is the message of the lake? The lake is a storehouse; it is a reservoir; it stores the brook up and keeps it, to be drawn upon later. There are many epochs in life like that. You send a boy to school and to college and make him spend eight or ten years in study, not simply that you want to make him do the work, or that you may say afterward that he has an education, but that you may help him to store up a fund of information and knowledge and gather certain resources and power without which he will be at a disadvantage in later

years. All the years afterward he will be drawing on that lake. If he does not it will become a stagnant swamp and be of no value to him; but the more he draws on it the fresher and more abundant will be its waters in all the time to come.

Our times of recreation and rest are like the lake. For a while we save up our vitality and force. We get a certain amount of energy and strength laid up to be drawn upon in the days that are to come. God's plan of the Sabbath is like that. God has planned that one day in seven shall be a lake, and that the year shall be a chain of lakes, fifty-two of them. All the week through, from Monday morning, the brook runs fiercely, tumbling and splashing, ever onward. But if on the Sunday we let the brook gather into the little lake of Sabbath peace and quiet and rest, body and mind and soul are refreshed, and Monday morning the stream of energy starts away with a certain reservoir of nourishment behind it that will be felt through all the week.

The pastures and fields have much to speak to us from God. The very stone walls and fences about them utter God's message. Has not God said in his book, "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him"?—which is one way of saying to us that we cannot break the law of God and

escape the punishment which belongs to it. The great benevolent laws of God, which are absolutely essential to our health and to our safe and happy lives on earth, are like the hedge or the wall about the farm, and no man can lay his hand on them without peril.

But go inside the field, and you will find a message. A man said to me the other day about a certain farm which failed to produce profitable crops that "it had been skinned." That struck me as rather a strange expression to use about a farm. I knew what it was to skin a calf, or a lamb, or a deer, but how would you skin a farm? He soon explained to me that it was a very easy thing to skin a farm. Keep raising crops on it without putting any fertilizer back on to the land, and very soon it will be so thoroughly skinned that it will no longer raise crops enough to pay for the farming. It is just like that in our human lives. You can skin a character, you can skin a mind and heart, just as surely as you can a farm. Brains need fertilizing. Your affections and your spiritual nature need phosphate just as well as the soil tilled by the farmer. The man who does not read, who does not keep in touch with fresh, strong minds in magazines and books, will after a while cease to produce bright thoughts and stimulating ideas. So

the man who does not read his Bible, who does not pray to God, who does not seek to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in being helpful to his neighbor, will have his nature skinned of reverence, of worship, and of devotion.

The same is true in our social fellowships. The man who does not cultivate friendship, who ceases to speak sympathetic and loving words, who no longer gives gentle and tender caresses in his family, will soon have a heart that is skinned and bankrupt of the very power to love and to enjoy the sweetest fellowships of life.

Let us not lose this great lesson of the fields. Put much into yourself and you may take much out. Fertilize and cultivate your brain and it will be rich in invention, it will be fruitful in ideas, it will be a great garden of enjoyment for you in every time of misfortune, and especially in old age. Fertilize your heart. Irrigate it with the fresh, pure streams of noble and honorable affection. Let your heart go out in generous friendship; make much of your friends; be unstinted in the love that pours forth among your family and kindred; always remember that love and friendship are worth infinitely more than dollars and applause. Do this, and there will be no hour of sorrow so dark, there will be no time of drought so fierce, there will be

no old age so feeble but that these fellowships of the heart will gladden and cheer your soul. Cultivate and fertilize your spiritual life. It is in you, this disposition to worship God, this reverence toward God, this longing for the immortal life, this going out of the soul after a knowledge that is greater than earth. Cultivate it; keep your heart open toward God every day; give your love to Christ, who was rich in heaven and yet for our sakes became poor on earth. In all your friendships make your tenderest, most lasting friendship with Jesus Christ. So it shall be that this spiritual nature which you thus cultivate and fertilize will become fruitful, and the graces of the Spirit will grow there. How beautiful are those blossoms! Faith, hope, love, gentleness, patience, forbearance, kindness, goodness, meekness, truth, honesty, justice—these are some of the flowers that grow in a spiritual nature thus fertilized by prayer and meditation and the humble doing from day to day of the work which God gives to us.

The difficulty with a theme like this is that one is embarrassed with a wealth of resources. I have said nothing of the message of the sun that cometh forth out of his chamber in the morning like a bridegroom, and who exults like a strong man to run a race. I have said nothing about the message

of the moon and the stars, that stud the midnight heavens with glory. I have said nothing of the message of the clouds which God is ever painting on the canvas of the sky; nothing of the storms—those quiet, gentle storms that come in the night so softly they do not waken you and are gone in the morning before sunrise; nothing of the thunderstorms that seem to come out of the viewless air, that are rocked by the winds, that are split by the lightning, that carry the artillery of heaven with them and awe us and make us afraid by their majesty and their sublimity. I have said nothing of the rainbow that follows the storm, God's bow of promise in the clouds, nor of that marvelous inspiration which so makes our blood to tingle which comes in the sunshine after rain.

I have said nothing of the singers of nature, from the cricket and the katydid up through all the scale of music that makes the fields and the woods to resound—the twitter of the swallow; the chirrup of the robin; the sweet concert of the thrushes; the shrill cry of the jay; the hoarse call of the crow; the screech of the owl, and many another voice, some gentle and plaintive, and others harsh and guttural, but all of them full of teaching and suggestions to the alert ear, the sensitive mind, and the reverent heart.

I have said nothing of God's love of beauty, of the wealth of colors which he has given us everywhere—the numerous greens of the springtime and early summer; the various colors, all of them beautiful, of the summer fields. Nor have I spoken of the way he has twined vines around rough-barked trees, and covered unsightly rocks with moss; nor of the flowers that grow not only in the pasture and meadow, but in every nook and cranny of canyon and cliff. The very shape and coloring of berries and of fruit, as well as insects and animals and birds, tell us that the beauty thirst of God is infinite.

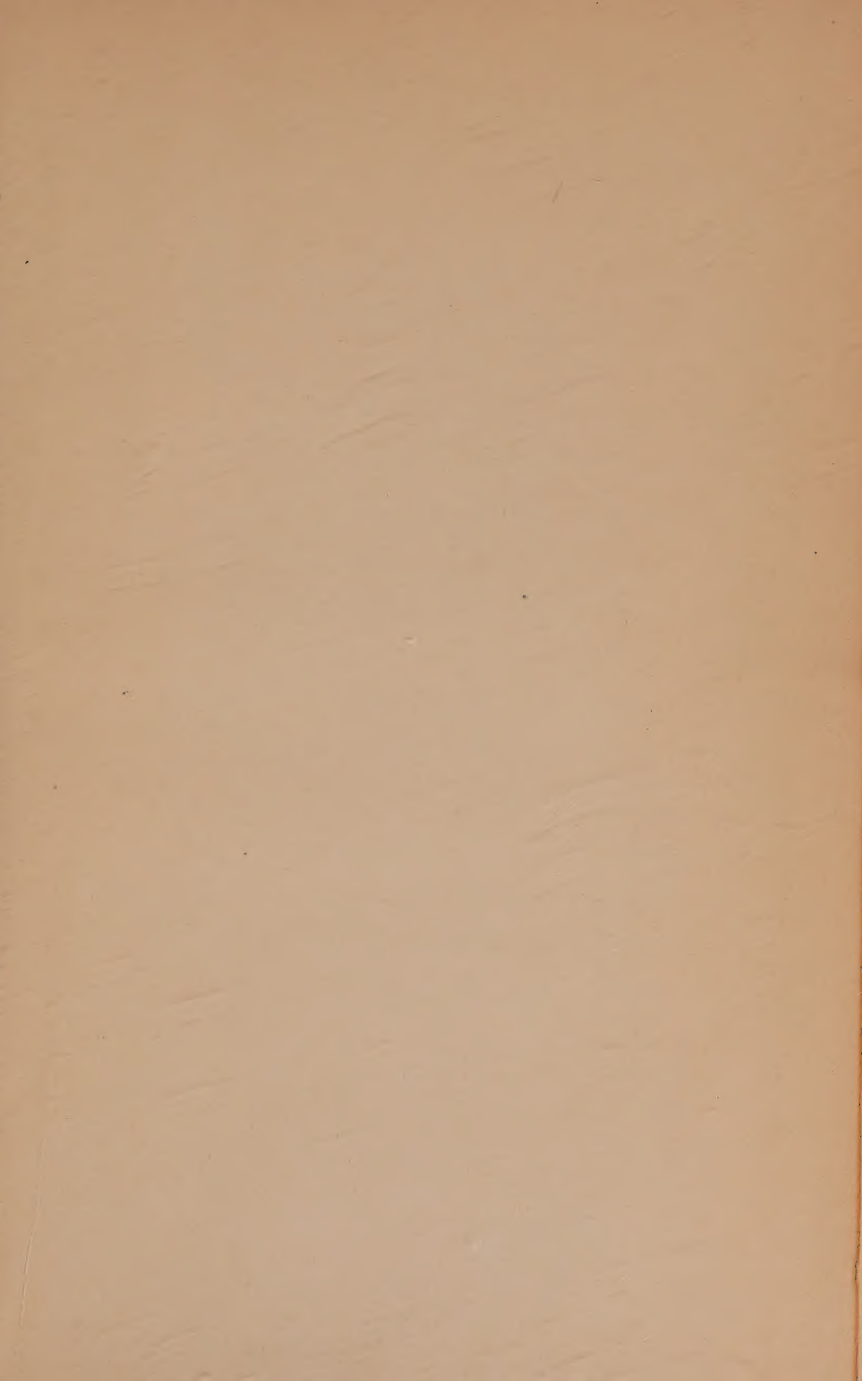
Surely we cannot stand in the tower these summer days and look out upon God's beautiful world without praying the prayer of the mountaineer, sung to us by Lucy Larcom:

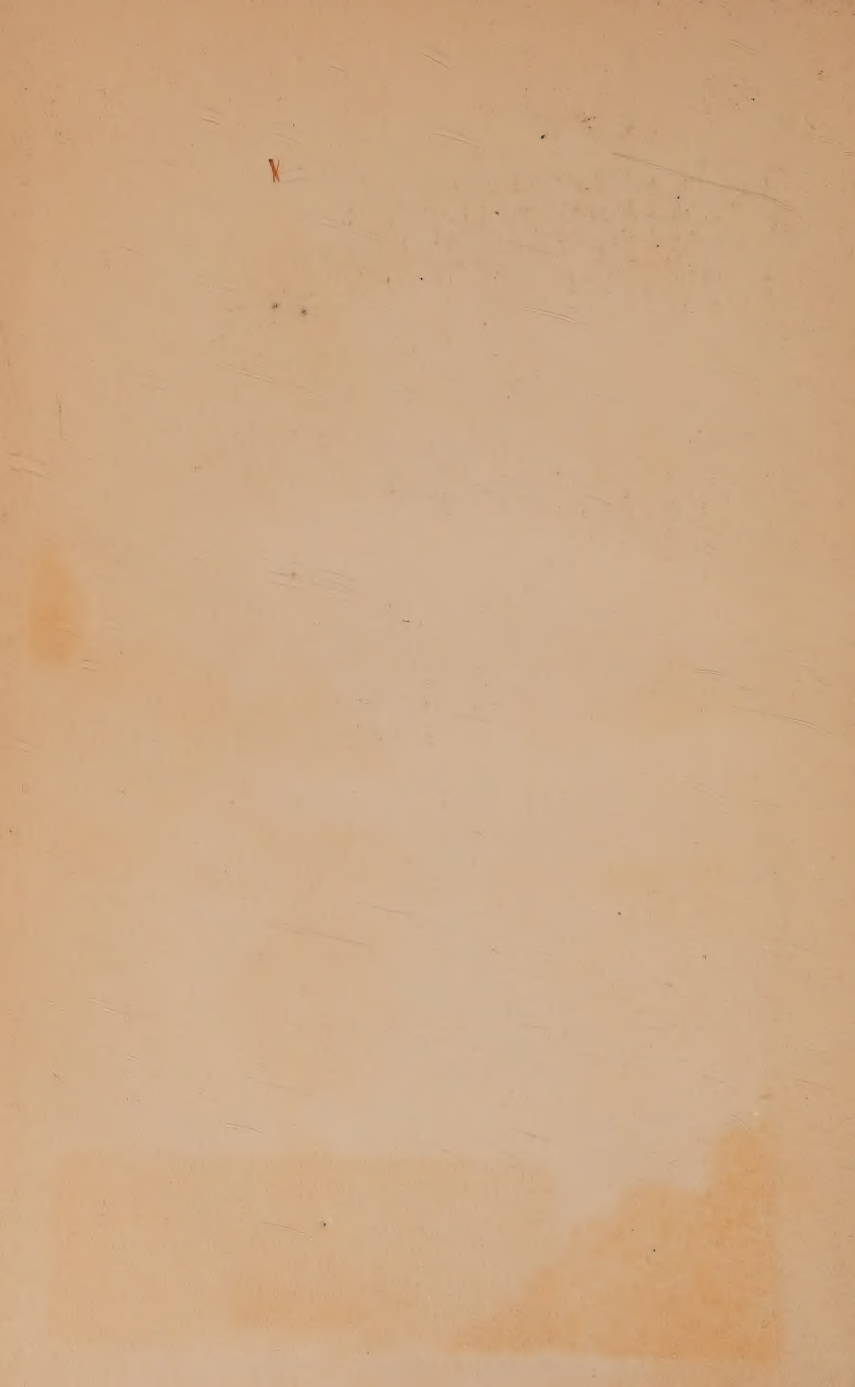
"Gird me with the strength of thy steadfast hills,
 The speed of thy streams give me!
 In the spirit that calms, with the life that thrills,
 I would stand or run for thee.
 Let me be thy voice, or thy silent power,
 As the cataract, or the peak—
 An eternal thought, in my earthly hour,
 Of the living God to speak!

"Clothe me in the rose-tints of thy skies,
 Upon morning summits laid!
 Robe me in the purple and gold that flies
 Through the shuttles of light and shade!

Let me rise and rejoice in thy smile aright,
As mountains and forests do!
Let me welcome thy twilight, and thy night,
And wait for thy dawn anew.

“Give me of the brook’s faith, joyously sung
Under clank of the icy chain!
Give me of the patience that hides among
The hilltops, in mist and rain!
Lift me up from the clod, let me breathe thy breath!
Thy beauty and strength give me!
Let me lose both the name and the meaning of death,
In the life that I share with thee!”





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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the team.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources needed to complete each task.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress regularly to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves comparing the actual outcomes with the original objectives and goals to determine the effectiveness of the project.

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